

## Sūrah Al-Anbiyā'

### (The Prophets)

Sūrah Al-Anbiya was revealed in Makkah and it has 112 Verses and 7 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

#### Verses 1 - 10

اَقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿١﴾ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ مُّحَدَّثٍ اِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوْهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ لَا هِيَ قُلُوْبُهُمْ السَّحَرُ وَاَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ قُلْ رَبِّىْ يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِى السَّمَاءِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٤﴾ بَلْ قَالُوْا اضْغَاثُ اَحْلَامٍ ۚ بَلْ اَقْتَرَبَهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ فَلْيَاْتِنَا بَايَةٍ كَمَا اُرْسِلَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ مَا اَمْنَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنَاهَا ۚ اَفْهُمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَمَا اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِىْ اِلَيْهِمْ فَاسْئَلُوْا اَهْلَ الدِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَدًا لَا يَأْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوْا خَالِدِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾ ثُمَّ صَدَقْنَاهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَاَنْجَيْنَاهُمْ وَمَنْ نَّشَاءُ وَاَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾ لَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا اِلَيْكُمْ كِتٰبًا فِيْهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ ۖ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

The reckoning of the people has drawn near to them while they are in negligence, turning away (from its signs). [1] No new message comes to them from their Lord, but they listen to it in a state of playing, [2] their

hearts paying no heed. And the wrongdoers whisper in secret, "This one is nothing but a human like you. Would you then go along with the sorcery while you have eyes to see?" [3]

He (the prophet) said, "My Lord knows all that is spoken in the heavens and the earth, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [4]

Further they said, "(The Qur'ān is) a mixture of hotch-potch dreams. Rather, he (the prophet) has fabricated it. Rather, he is a poet. So, let him bring a sign to us, as the earlier ones were sent with." [5] Not a single town We destroyed did believe before them. So then, will they believe? [6]

And We did not send before you messengers except men whom We inspired with revelation. So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the Message, if you do not know. [7] And We did not make them as bodies that ate no food, nor were they immortal. [8] Then We made the promise come true for them, so We saved them and the ones We willed, and destroyed the transgressors. [9]

Surely, We have sent down to you a book having a good name for you. So, do you not understand? [10]

## Commentary

### Importance of Sūrah Al-Anbiyā'

Sayyidnā Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ has said that four Sūrah viz Al-Kahf, Maryam, Ṭahā and Al-Anbiyā' are among the earlier revelations which I value a lot and keep them close to my heart. (Qurtubī)

إِقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ (The reckoning of the people has drawn near - 21:1) It means that the time is near when people will have to give an account of their deeds. Here, the reference is to the Day of Judgment, and its approach is in relation to bygone ages, as the *ummah* of Sayyidnā Muḥammad Al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ is the last of them all. And if the meaning of the word حِسَابٌ (reckoning) is taken in its general sense then reckoning in the grave is also included, which each individual faces immediately after death. It is for this reason that an individual's death is regarded as his Day of Reckoning. مَنْ مَاتَ فَقَدْ قَامَتْ قِيَامَتُهُ (for a person who has died his Day of Reckoning has arrived) so the latter explanation makes the verse very

clear in that the individual reckoning for every one is not very far, no matter how long one lives, because death is certain and no one knows when it will befall. The underlying message of this verse is to warn those people, whether believers or non-believers, who are in a state of slumber due to indulgence in worldly affairs, unmindful of the certainty that all this will come to an end one day. In fact it is this disregard of the Day of Judgment which is the root cause of all ills.

مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ ذِكْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ مُحَدَّثٍ إِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوهُ وَهُمْ لَا يُعْبُونَ لَأَهْلِيَةً قُلُوبُهُمْ (No new message comes to them from their Lord, but they listen to it in a state of playing, their hearts paying no heed. 21:2,3) This verse describes the state of those who disregard the punishment in the grave and in the Hereafter and do not prepare themselves to counter it with good deeds. The verse further describes their practice of making light of new Qur'ānic verses when they are recited before them. They are totally oblivious of the fear of God and the Hereafter. The verse can be explained in two other ways. One, that they keep themselves engaged in their own amusement and take no notice of Qur'ānic verses when they are recited before them and two, that they ridicule the Qur'ānic verses themselves.

اَفَتَأْتُونَ السِّحْرَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ (Would you then go along with sorcery while you have eyes to see? - 21:3) Those people used to discuss among themselves secretly that the claim of the Holy Prophet ﷺ about his prophethood should not be accepted, because he was an ordinary human being like all others and not an angel. On the other hand not even the most rigid among the unbelievers could deny the supreme charm and eloquence of the Book of Allah nor its power to influence people when it was recited before them. Therefore, in order to turn people away from the Holy Book they started calling it magic and black art. They thought that they could keep people away from Islam by labelling the Qur'ān as a book of magic thereby dissuading people from going to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and listening to Qur'ān. Probably they used to discuss this subject secretly among themselves lest the Muslims come to know about their foolish views and unveil their fallacy.

بَلْ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ (Further they said, [The Qur'ān is] a mixture of hotch-potch dreams. - 21:5.) Dreams having an element of personal and satanic thoughts are called أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ. That is why this term (أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ) has been translated as "hotch-potch dreams". What it means is that in the

first place the unbelievers called the Qur'ān as magic, then they described it as a collection of disturbed dreams, and then they said it was a forgery and fabrication against Allah Ta'ālā to call it His words; and finally they said that he ﷺ was a poet and the Qur'ān represented his poetic compositions.

فَلْيَأْتِنَا بآيَةٍ (So let him bring to us a sign - 21:5) It means that the unbelievers demanded from the Holy Prophet ﷺ certain specific miracles to be shown as a proof of his being a real Prophet. In response to this demand, Allah Ta'ālā said in this verse that the same demand for miracles was also made by the people in the past from other prophets, and when their request was met, it was of no avail. They did not submit to Allah even after witnessing the miracles of their choice. And Allah has decreed that people who do not submit to Him even after they have seen the miracle of their choice are subjected to His wrath even in this world and are destroyed. Allah, in His Divine Mercy and in view of the honoured position of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had granted to his Ummah immunity from the terrible punishment which is the inevitable fate of those people who defy the Will of Allah. It was not, therefore, considered desirable to show them miracles of their choice because if they, like the earlier people, persisted in their unbelief even after seeing those miracles, they too would invite the wrath of Allah Ta'ālā. Then in اَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ (Will they believe?) there is a hint that there was no likelihood of these people accepting the true faith even after seeing the miracles of their choice. Hence they were not shown the desired miracle.

فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the message, if you do not know. - 21:7) In this verse, scholars of Injīl (Evangelists) and Torah are referred to as أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ (people of the message), who had accepted the Holy Prophet's ﷺ prophethood. Therefore, what it actually means is that if you are not aware whether the prophets of the past were angels or ordinary men then you should find out from the scholars of Injīl and Torah as they know perfectly well that all prophets were human beings. It is, therefore, quite possible that here the term أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ (people of the message) refers to all Jews and Christians (even though they have not believed in the Holy prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ).

**Ruling:** Qurtubī has said in his exegesis that this verse has made it

clear that ignorant persons who are not acquainted with the rules of Shari'ah must seek knowledge from scholars and then follow them accordingly.

### The Holy Qur'an is an honour and pride for the Arabs

كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ (a book having a good name for you - 21:10): The word كتابا (Book) is meant for Qur'an and ذِكْر (name) is used here for honour, excellence and fame. Thus what is meant here is that the revelation of Qur'an in Arabic language is a great honour and ever lasting fame for the Arabs and they should value it as such. History has proved that by Allah's Mercy and by the blessings of Qur'an Arabs have dominated the world and ruled over it for a long time. This is also a fact of life that Arabs gained dominance over the world not because of any tribal or linguistic supremacy but because of Qur'an. If there was no Qur'an, probably no one would have known about the Arabs at all.

### Verses 11 - 15

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً وَأَنْشَأْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ ﴿١١﴾ فَلَمَّا أَحْسَسُوا بِأَسَآ إِذَاهُمْ مِنْهَا يَرْكُضُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ لَا تَرْكُضُوا وَارْجِعُوا إِلَى مَا أُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيهِ وَمَسْكِنِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْأَلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالُوا يُوَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَمَا زَالَتْ تِلْكَ دَعْوَاهُمْ حَتَّى جَعَلْنَاهُمْ حَصِيدًا خُمِيدِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

And how many a town We crushed, that were wrongdoing, and We raised up another people after them. [11] So when they sensed Our punishment, all of a sudden, they started fleeing from it. [12] Do not flee, and go back to the luxuries you were involved in and to your homes. May be you are asked questions. [13] They said, "Woe to us! We were wrongdoers indeed." [14] Then, this continued to be their cry till We turned them into stubble, totally extinguished. [15]

### Commentary

These verses describe the destruction of those settlements which some

exegesis have taken as *Ḥadhūrā'* (حضوراء) and *Qilābah* (قلايه) of Yemen. Allah Ta'ālā had sent there a prophet about whose name there are different versions. Some say he was Mūsā Ibn Mishā while others say his name was Shu'aīb, in which case he was a different prophet from the one who lived in Madyan. This Prophet was killed by his people, who were, as a punishment annihilated by the infidel King Nabucad Nazzar.

This King was placed in authority over them just as he was used as an instrument for the punishment of Banī Isra'īl when they strayed from the righteous path in Palestine. In fact, Qur'ān has not identified any specific settlement. Hence it will be apt to leave the subject open, so that these settlements of Yemen may also come in its ambit. واللّٰهُ اعلم (Only Allah knows best).

### Verses 16 - 29

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لِعِبِينِ ﴿١٦﴾ لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَنْ  
تَتَّخِذَ لَهُمْ لَا تَتَّخِذُهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا ۖ إِن كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ بَلْ نَقْذِفُ  
بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ ۖ وَلَكُمْ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا  
تَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَلَهُ ۖ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا  
يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ  
وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا إِلَهًا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ هُمْ يُنْشِرُونَ  
﴿٢١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلَ اللَّهِ لَفَسَدَتَا ۖ فَسُبْحَنَ اللَّهُ رَبِّ  
الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾  
أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ ۖ هَذَا ذِكْرٌ مَنْ مَعِيَ  
وَذِكْرٌ مَنْ قَبْلِي ۖ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْحَقَّ فَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ  
﴿٢٤﴾ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا  
أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَنَهُ ۖ بَلْ عِبَادٌ

مُكْرَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ يَعْلَمُ  
 مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ وَهُمْ مِنَ  
 خَشْيَتِهِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَمَنْ يَقُلْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي إِلَهٌ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَذَلِكَ  
 نَجْزِيهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what lies between them for play. [16] Had We intended to have a pastime, We would have had it from Our own, if We were to do so. [17] Instead, We launch the truth against the falsehood, which smashes it, and in no time it is nothing. And woe to you for what you relate. [18]

And to Him belong all those in the heavens and the earth. And those who are near Him are not arrogant against His worship, nor are they sluggish. [19] They proclaim His purity night and day, never slackening. [20]

Or have they taken to gods from the earth who raise the dead? [21] Had there been gods in them (the heavens and the earth) other than Allah, both would have fallen in disorder. So pure is Allah, the Lord of the Throne, from what they describe. [22] He is not questioned of what He does, and they are questioned. [23]

Or have they taken to gods besides Him? Say, "Bring your proof." Here is the Message for those with me and the Message for those before me. Yet most of them do not know the truth and therefore they are averse. [24] And We did not send before you any messenger but We revealed to him that there is no god but I, so worship Me." [25]

And they said, "The Raḥmān (All-Merciful) has taken to Himself a son". Pure is He. They are but servants, honoured. [26] They do not precede Him in speech and only under His command they act. [27] He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them, and they make recommendation for none but for whom He likes, and in awe of Him they are apprehensive. [28] And whoever of them says, "I am god besides Him", is the one

**whom We will recompense with Jahannam. This is how  
We recompense the transgressors. [29]**

### Commentary

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَإِغْوٍ (And We did not create the heavens and the earth ... 21:16.) It means that we have not created the sky and the earth, and everything that lies in between them for mere amusement. In the preceding verses a reference has been made to the annihilation of certain settlements. In this verse there is a suggestion that just as the creation of the earth and the sky and all other created things was according to a set design, the destruction of the settlements was also the result of a definite purpose. Having witnessed the marvels and wonders of creation which are so abundantly spread all over, manifesting Allah's omnipotence and omniscience, do they still think that all these things are futile and without significance?

The word لَإِغْوٍ is taken from لَعِبَ (play), which means having no useful objective (Rāghib) while لَهْوٍ (pastime) means an act which has no purpose at all except to provide amusement in free time. The disbelievers who argue against the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Qur'an and reject the Oneness of Allah and deny His Power, despite its abundant manifestations, then it is apparent that they have a notion that all this creation is meant for amusement and pastime. The verse rejects this false view and says that Allah's creation is not for fun and pastime. A little reflection will show that even the minutest particle of the universe has its utility and each and everything created by Allah has a purpose which speaks by itself for His omniscience and Oneness.

لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ لَهُمْ لَهْوًا لَا تَخِذْهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ۖ إِنْ كُنَّا فَعَالِينَ (Had We intended to have a pastime, We would have had it from Our own, if We were to do so. - 21:17) It means that if We were to create something for amusement, there was no need to create the earth and the sky, and We could have done so from the things around Us.

In Arabic language the word لَوْ is used for imaginary and non-existent things. Here also it is used in the same sense i.e. those foolish people who regard all the wonderful things of the earth and the sky objects of fun and frolic do not realize that creation on such a gigantic scale cannot be undertaken for amusement. The suggestion here is that even a person of



ordinary common sense would not indulge in a project which has no serious purpose, to say nothing of Allah Ta'ālā who is Supreme and Exalted.

The commonly accepted meaning of لَهْو is a purposeless pastime, and this meaning has been adopted in translating this verse. According to some commentators this word لَهْو is also used sometimes for wife or children in which case the meaning of the verse would be a denial of the belief of the Jews and Christians, who thought that Sayyidnā 'Uzair and Sayyidnā Masīh عليهما السلام were God's sons. If Allah wished to have children why should they be from humans and not from other creatures around Him. (Allah knows best).

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ، فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ (Instead, We launch the truth against the falsehood, which smashes it, and in no time it is nothing. - 21:18) The literal meaning of قَذَفَ is to throw horizontally which has been translated above as launching) يَدْمَغُ means to hit on the head (to smash it) and زَاهِقٌ means something which is gone or vanishes without leaving a trace.

This verse explains that Allah has not created this marvelous universe with earth and the sky for amusement. This creation is the result of a carefully thought out plan which aims at distinguishing right from wrong. Observation of Nature's creations leads people along the righteous path and protects them from evil. This idea is conveyed in the verse by saying that virtue is hurled against evil and smashes its head so completely that it disappears without a trace.

وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحِيرُونَ (And those who are near Him are not arrogant against His worship, nor are they sluggish. - 21:19) It means that Allah's servants who are with Him i.e. angels pray to Him all the time without ceasing. So, if the humans do not pray to Him, it will not make any difference to Him, but they themselves will be the losers. It is human nature to judge others by applying one's own situation to them. Hence there are two possibilities preventing a person from offering acts of worship ceaselessly. One, that he regards it below his dignity to bow down before any one and therefore does not pray to Allah Ta'ālā. Secondly, it is physically not possible for a man to worship without a break because he needs to rest in between. In view of these two human constraints, it is

explained towards the end of the verse that the angels are free from these compulsions. They do not regard it below their dignity to worship Allah constantly nor do they get tired or need any rest or sleep. This point has been brought to a conclusion in the next verse by saying *لَا يَسْخُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ* (They proclaim His purity night and day, never slackening - 21:20).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Ḥārith رضي الله عنه said that he asked Ka'b al-Aḥbār رضي الله عنه how it was that angels kept reciting *tasbīḥ* (proclaiming Allah's purity) all the time. Did they not have anything else to do? And if they did how could they do both things simultaneously, that is reciting *tasbīḥ* and do other things. To this Ka'b replied "O my nephew! Does performance of any of your jobs prevent you from breathing?" The truth is that *tasbīḥ* comes to angels just as breathing comes to human beings which continues without stopping whatever else he may be doing. (Qurṭubī, Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ)

*أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا إِلَهًا مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ هُمْ يُنشِرُونَ* (Or have they taken to gods from the earth who raise the dead? - 21:21) Here the ignorance of polytheists is described variously. Allah says how foolish and ignorant the polytheists are that they have made their gods from amongst the creatures of the earth who do not have the power of life and death. Only a Being which has these powers is worthy of being worshipped *لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلَ اللَّهِ فَسَدَتَا* (Had there been gods in them [the heavens and the earth] other than Allah, both would have fallen in disorder. - 21:22). This is an argument of common nature in favour of the Oneness of Allah which is based on common practice. It is also a logical proof of the oneness of God and a great deal of literature is available to explain it in the books on theology (*عِلْمُ الْكَلَامِ*). The argument of common nature is that if there were two Gods, each independent and sovereign, then the commands of both would prevail on the earth and in the sky which is not possible, because it is inconceivable that both of them would have common views on all matters. And if there are differences of opinion which is inevitable where power is shared, there could be conflict, which would always lead to chaos and confusion. The suggestion that the two Gods could consult each other before passing orders has been adequately discussed, and rejected, in the books of theology. The thing to note is that if the two Gods had to take decisions jointly, then neither of them would have been sovereign, and a god with divided sovereignty is not God. The next verse viz: *لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْتَلَوْنَ* (He is not questioned

of what He does, and they are questioned) probably reinforces the argument that anyone who is answerable for his actions to someone else cannot be God.

هَذَا ذِكْرٌ مَنْ مَعِيَ وَذِكْرٌ مَنْ قَبْلِي (Here is the Message for those with me and the Message for those before me. - 21: 24) One explanation of this verse on which the translation is based is that ذِكْرٌ means Message and "Message for those with me" refers to Qur'ān, while "the Message for those before me" refers to Torah, Injīl (Evangel) and Zabūr (Psalms), the earlier divine books. According to this interpretation, the meaning of the verse is that neither the Qur'ān (which is the Book for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his followers) nor the older books contain anything to suggest worship of anyone else but Allah. Despite the fact that the texts of Torah and Injīl (Evangel) have been altered, it is not suggested in either of them that Allah has partners with whom he shares His authority. Another explanation of the verse is given in Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ according to which the word ذِكْرٌ (*dhikr*) means here "description", and the sense is that this Qur'ān is a description for the people who were in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which describes for them the rules of Shari'ah and invites them to the correct way of life. At the same time it is a description of those who were before the Holy Prophet ﷺ because it keeps alive the stories and the traditions of people long gone by.

لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ (They do not precede Him in speech and only under His command they act. 21:27) This verse refutes the claim of pagans of Makkah that angels were daughters of Allah. How can angels be Allah's children when they stand in such awe in His presence that they neither initiate any talk nor act against His commands. They simply await His words and act accordingly. This also points towards an important etiquette of behaving in the company of elders. That is, when a matter is brought forth in front of a group of people, the people before speaking themselves first, should wait until the elder among such a group has spoken. Speaking prior to the elder is contrary to the manners governing respect of elders.

### Verses 30 - 33

أَوَلَمْ يَرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا  
وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي

الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِي أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِهِمْ ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّهُمْ  
يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَقْفًا مَحْفُوظًا ۖ وَهُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهَا  
مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۚ  
كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

Have the disbelievers not seen that the heavens and the earth were closed, then We opened them? And We created from water every living thing. Would they yet not believe? [30] And We created mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with them, and We have made therein paths and ways, so that they are guided. [31]

And We made the sky a roof, protected; and they are averse to its signs. [32] And He is the One who has created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, each floating in an orbit. [33]

### Commentary

أَوَلَمْ يَرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا (Have the disbelievers not seen. - 21:30) Here the word رُؤْيَتْ (to see, to think) is used in its general sense i.e. knowledge, whether acquired by visual observation or by way of logical conclusion. The discussion which follows refers partly to actual observation and partly to logical inference.

أَنَّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا (The heavens and the earth were closed, then We opened them. - 30) The word رَتَقَ (ratq) means to close and فَتَقَ (fatq) means to open. When used in combination the words mean full control in the management and execution of a job. The translation of the verse is that the earth and the sky were closed and Allah opened them up. Different exegesists have explained differently the sense of the words "closing" and "opening", but the meanings which the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the majority of the exegesists have adopted are that closing of sky and earth means shutting off rainfall from the sky and vegetation from the earth, and opening means the opening of these two

i.e. the rainfall and vegetation.

The following story about Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ has been related in Ibn Kathīr's commentary on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. A man went to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ and requested him to explain the meaning of this verse to him. He pointed out towards Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ and told him to go to him for an explanation of the verse. He also requested him to let him know the explanation that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ gave to him. The man went to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ and asked him what do the words رَتَقًا (ratqan) and فَتَقْنَا (fata-qnā) mean in the verse. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ replied that originally the sky was closed and there was no rainfall, likewise the earth was closed and there was no growth on it. When Allah Ta'ālā sent down man on earth to live here He opened up rainfall from the sky and the vegetation from the earth. After learning the explanation of the verse the man went back to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ and repeated to him what he had learnt from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. Then Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ remarked that he was then left in no doubt that Allah Ta'ālā had graciously bestowed upon Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ a complete knowledge of Qur'ān. He further said that previously he used to consider Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās's ؓ explanations of the Holy Qur'ān as bold attempts, of which he did not approve. But now he was convinced that Allah Ta'ālā had granted to him special insight into the meaning of Qur'ān, and that the explanation he gave of the words رَتَقًا وَفَتَقْنَا was absolutely correct.

This story of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ is also reported in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī through Ibn Mundhir and Abū Nu'aim, and a group of the scholars of ḥadīth including Ḥākim, the writer of Mustadark, who has accepted the tradition as correct.

After reporting this narration Ibn Ibn 'Atiyyah al-'Aufi says that this interpretation is ḥasan and comprehensive, and is compatible with the text of the Qur'ān. It contains a lesson and argument against the infidels and also mentions about the Omnipotence and the special bounties of Allah Ta'ala, which is the basis of His Oneness and recognition of His attributes. The following sentence وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ (and We created

from water every living thing) also corroborates this interpretation. Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥiṭ has also adopted the same interpretation. Qurṭubī has declared this explanation to be that of 'Ikrimah as well and said that another verse also endorses this meaning.<sup>1</sup> وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ وَالْأَرْضِ ذَاتِ الصَّدْعِ<sup>1</sup> Tabari has also adopted this very interpretation.

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ (And We created from water every living thing. - 21:30) Water is an essential element in the creation of all living things. According to the latest research it is not only the humans and animals which possess both life and soul but also plants and minerals. Water plays a very important role in the creation, growth and evolution of all living things.

Ibn Kathīr has quoted Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه on the authority of Imām Aḥmad رحمه الله تعالى, that he requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ to tell him how things were created. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that everything was created from water. Then Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه asked about the acts that lead one to the Jannah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied:

افش السّلام واطعم الطّعام وصل الارحام وقم بالليل والناس نيام ثم ادخل الجنّة  
بسلام (تفرد به احمد وهذا اسناد على شرط الشيخين النخ)

"Make greeting with Salam common between you, and feed (others) and observe the rights of kinship, and stand (in prayers) at night when people are asleep. Then enter the Jannah with peace".

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِهِمْ (And We created mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with them. 21:31) The word مَيَدَ (*mayd*) in Arabic language means to be convulsed. Therefore, the meaning of this verse is

1. The author has explained the interpretation of this verse as adopted by many authorities. But the miraculous style of the Holy Qur'ān is that the words used by it may have different possibilities for interpretation. The words *ratq* and *fatq* used here have another meaning which is 'being compact' and 'being separated'. If these words are taken in this sense, the verse may also be translated as, "The heavens and the earth were compact, then We separated them." In this case the verse will refer to an event of the early creation, meaning thereby that the heavens and the earth were originally a single body. Thereafter Allah separated the earth from the heavens. The contemporary research about the Big Bang is close to this description. But it should always be kept in mind that the Qur'ānic descriptions are independent of any scientific theory and the Qur'ān should not be made subject to ever-changing theories. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

that Allah Ta'ālā has planted mountains on the earth to hold it in place because any violent movement of the earth would be catastrophic to those who live on it.

كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ (Each floating in an orbit - 21:33) The word فَلَكٌ (falak) is used for circle or anything round. For this reason the word فَلَكٌ (falak) is also used sometimes for sky. In this verse it means the orbits of the sun and the moon in which they revolve. The Qur'ānic words do not specify the location of the orbits in the space but space research has now established that these orbits are located in the space much below the sky. This verse apparently indicates that the Sun also moves around an orbit. The scientists previously did not believe in the rotation of the Sun, but the most modern research has now accepted it.

### Verses 34 - 47

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ أَفَإِنْ مِتَّ فَهُمْ الْخَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾  
 كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۖ وَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ۖ وَآلَيْنَا  
 تُرْجِعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَإِذَا رَأَوْا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِذَا يَتَّخِذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوًا  
 أَهَذَا الَّذِي يَذْكُرُ آلِهَتَكُمْ ۖ وَهُمْ يَذْكُرُ الرَّحْمَنَ هُمْ كَفِرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾  
 خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَجٍ ۖ سَآوَرِيكُمْ آتَيْنِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونِ ﴿٣٧﴾  
 وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾ لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ  
 كَفَرُوا حِينَ لَا يَكْفُونُ عَنْ وُجُوهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ  
 وَلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ بَلْ تَأْتِيهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ  
 رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَى بِرُسُلٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ  
 بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ مَنْ يَكْلَأُكُمْ  
 بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ ۖ بَلْ هُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾  
 أَمْ لَهُمُ الْهَيْئَةُ تَمْنَعُهُمْ مِنْ دُونِنَا ۖ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ  
 مِّنَّا يُصْحَبُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ

الْعُمْرُ أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا أَفَهُمُ  
الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُنذِرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَاءَ  
إِذَا مَا يُنذَرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَلَئِنْ مَسَّتْهُمْ نَفْحَةٌ مِنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ  
يَوَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ  
فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا  
وَكَفَى بِنَا حَسِيبِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

And We did not assign immortality to any human (even) before you. So, if you die, will they then live for ever? [34] Every one has to taste death. And We test you all through bad and good (situations) with a trial. And to Us you are to be returned. [35]

And when disbelievers see you, they do nothing but make mockery of you (saying) "Is this the one who talks of your gods?" – while they themselves are the denier of even mentioning the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). [36]

Man is made of haste. I shall show you My signs, so do not seek haste from Me. [37] And they say, "When will this promise be (fulfilled), if you are true?" [38] Only if the disbelievers were to know the time when they will not (be able to) keep off the fire from their faces or from their backs, nor will they be helped. [39] Rather, it will come upon them suddenly and will baffle them. So they will not be able to turn it back, nor will they be given respite. [40]

And messengers have been mocked at before you. So those who laughed at them were besieged by what they have been mocking at. [41]

Say, "Who will guard you, during night and day, against the Raḥmān (All-Merciful)?" Rather, to the remembrance of their Lord they are averse. [42] Or do they have gods who protect them besides Us? They are not able to help even themselves, nor are they allowed by Us to have company. [43]



But We have given benefits to these and their fathers so much so that life prolonged against them. So do they not see that We are coming to the land reducing it from its sides? Then, are they the ones to prevail? [44]

Say, "I simply warn you by revelation, and the deaf do not listen to the call, when they are warned." [45] And if they are touched by a whiff of the punishment of your Lord, they will certainly say, "Woe to us! We were wrongdoers indeed." [46]

And We shall place scales to do justice on the Day of Judgment. So no one shall be wronged in any way. And even if it (any act, good or evil) is to the measure of a mustard seed, We will bring it forth. And We are enough to take account. [47]

### Commentary

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ (And We did not assign immortality to any human (even) before you. - 21:34) The preceding verses give a strong and logical rebuttal of the unfounded and exaggerated beliefs of the infidels and polytheists to the effect that Sayyidnā Masīḥ and Sayyidnā 'Uzair علیہما السلام are the associates of God or that Masīḥ and the Angels are God's children. Unable to come up with a satisfactory answer to the rational and logical arguments given by the Qur'ān, the infidels of Makkah were in despair and wished for the death of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This has been mentioned in some other verses also, like e.g. تَرْتَضِ بِهِ رَبِّ (تَرْتَضِ بِهِ رَبِّ) (52:30). In this verse (34) Allah Ta'ālā has given two answers to their pitiable wish. One, that even if the Holy Prophet ﷺ died early how would it help them? If they thought that they could use the death of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as an argument against his prophethood, they were very much mistaken, because all the other Prophets whose prophethood they themselves had accepted, also died when their time came. Thus, if the death of their own prophets did not alter their position as prophets, how could the death of the Holy Prophet ﷺ change his position? Secondly, if their purpose in wishing for his early death was only to appease their frustration, then they should have known that death is universal, and everybody has to die sooner or later.

اگر بمرد عدو جائے شاد مانی نیست ☆ کہ زندگانی مانیز جاودانی نیست

If an enemy dies, it is not to be rejoiced, because our own life is not eternal.

## What is death?

Allah has said كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ 'Every soul has to taste death'. Here the word soul refers to the living things of the earth, who must all face death, but does not include the angels. There is a difference of opinion about whether the angels will also die or not on the Day of Judgment. Some say that every living thing will die, though momentarily, irrespective of whether they are of the earth or the skies. But others maintain that angels and *ḥūr*s and *ghilmān* of Paradise are excluded from this general rule. (Only God knows best) (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī) Majority of the scholars believe that death is the departure of soul from the mortal human frame, while soul itself is a subtle ethereal living thing which is made of light and resides in human body just as fragrance resides in the rose. Ibn al-Qayyim has convincingly proved this point in his book. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

The term ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ means that every individual will feel the pain of death - 21:35, because considering the manner in which body and soul are conjoined together their separation should obviously entail some pain. There are some saintly persons who regard death as a deliverance from the trials and tribulations of the worldly life and a means of bringing them closer to their Supreme love, that is Allah. This pleasure does not negate the agony of death, because where the reward is high, a little pain is easily tolerated.

## Worldly comforts and discomforts are a test

وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً

And We test you all through bad and good (situations) with a trial. - 21:35

It means that man is tested both by good things and by bad things. شَرٌّ (bad) includes unpleasant things such as illness, grief, pain, poverty etc. while خَيْرٌ (good) means desirable things, like good health, happiness, comfort and abundance. Man is subjected to these conditions in this world for test and the test is that he should show patience and endurance in the face of adversity and should offer thanks to Allah when his life is peaceful and comfortable. Wise men have said that, it is more difficult to be steadfast and consistent in offering thanks to Allah for His gifts than to persevere and show patience in difficult circumstances. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه is reported to have said:

بَلَيْنَا بِالضَّرِّ أَفْصَبْرًا وَبَلَيْنَا بِالشَّرِّ أَفَلَمْ نَصْبِرْ (روح المعاني)

"We were tested by discomforts and We bore it with patience,

but when we were tested by pleasures, we could not observe patience (i.e. we could not offer gratitude to Allah as was due)".  
(Ruh ul-Ma'ani)

### Haste is undesirable

خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ (Man is made of haste. - 21:37). عَجَلٍ ('*ajal*') means haste or hurry. The word is used in situations when one desires things to happen before their time, and this trait is bad by its very nature. In another place also the word is used to denote human weakness. For instance وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا i.e. Man is prone to haste - 17:11, meaning that he is very impatient. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام went to the mount Ṭūr in a hurry leaving his people behind, he was censured by Allah Ta'ālā.

Prophets and the devout people who try to excel each other in the performance of righteous deeds have been commended and their zeal to do good deeds does not constitute haste and hurry because they do not try to do these deeds before their time. In fact they do the deeds on time, but try to excel each other in quantity and quality.

Here خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ (Man is made of haste - 21:37) means that haste and hurry is one of the many weaknesses which are inherent in human nature. When a man is identified by some intrinsic trait of his character, the Arabs used to say that he is 'made of' that trait. For instance a short tempered man would be called a 'man made of anger'.

سَأُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِي (I shall show you my signs - 21:37) Here the word آيات (signs) refers to those miracles and events which bear evidence to the honesty of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the truth of his message. (Qurtubī) These miracles also occurred during the battle of Badr (غزوه بدر) when the Muslims who were considered weak and worthy of contempt gained a great victory over their enemies.

### Weighing of actions on the Day of Judgment and the scales to be used for this purpose

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ (And We shall place scales to do justice on the Day of Judgment - 21:47) The word مَوَازِين is plural of مِيزَان, which means a scale. In this verse the word is used plural which some exegesists have explained by saying that for measuring deeds and actions of people many scales will be used. Different balances may be used for different individuals, or different balances may be used for different types of deeds.

But majority of scholars agree that there will be only one balance to weigh all the deeds, and that the word has been used in plural because it will serve the purpose of many balances and measure the deeds of all the children of Sayyidnā 'Ādam ﷺ from the earliest time to the Day of Judgment, whose count only Allah knows. قِسْط (Qisṭ) means justice and fairness. Thus the meaning of the verse is that the balance will measure fairly and justly and no injustice will be done to any one. Mustadrak of Hākim has reported through Sayyidnā Salmān ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the balance that will be used on the Day of Judgment for weighing deeds and actions will be so enormous in size and span that it could enclose the earth and the sky within its fold for measurement. (Maḏharī)

Ḥaḏīṡ Abū al-Qasim Lalkai has narrated in his Sunan (سُنَن) through Sayyidnā Anas ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that an angel will be posted on the balance and every man will be brought before it. In case his good deeds overweigh his sins the angel will announce loudly, which everyone present will hear, that so and so has passed his test and now he will never be deprived of anything. And if the sins of a person overweigh his virtues, then the angel will announce that the wretched so and so has failed his test and has been made destitute for ever. Hafiz has also reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Hudhaifah ؓ, that the angel who will be posted on the balance on the Day of Judgment is none other but Sayyidnā Jibra'īl ؑ.

Hākim, Baihaqi and 'Ājurri have narrated through Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها that she enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether he will remember his family members on the Day of Judgment; to which he replied that on that Day there will be three occasions when no one will remember any one. Firstly, when people will be brought before the scale of justice for the weightment of their deeds. Until it is known whether one's virtues overweigh the sins or otherwise, everyone would forget every one else. Secondly, when the records of deeds will be thrown in the air, until they are either placed in the right hand (which will be a sign of salvation) or in the left hand or from behind (which will be a sign of punishment) it would indicate God's wrath. Thirdly, the occasion to cross the bridge of Širāṭ (صِرَاط) i.e. until this bridge is crossed, no one will remember any one else. (Maḏharī)

وَأِنْ كَانَ مِنْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خُرْدَلٍ آتَيْنَا بِهَا (And even if it (any act, good or evil) is to the measure of a mustard seed, we will bring it forth - 21:47) It means that on the Day of Reckoning, all the deeds of every person, big or small, good or bad, will be brought forth so that they may be subjected to reckoning and weighment.

### Method of the weighment of deeds

One possibility is that deeds and actions of a person recorded by angels will be weighed as indicated by the famous Ḥadīth generally known as حَدِيثُ الْبِطَاقَةِ (*ḥadīth al-biṭāqah*<sup>1</sup>). The other possibility is that deeds of a person will be converted into absolute substances which will then be weighed. By and large the traditions support the second view, and a majority of scholars have adopted this version. The verse وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا (And they will find what they did all there - 18:49) and the like in the Holy Qur'ān and many traditions also confirm the second view.

### Accountability of Deeds

Tirmidhī has reported through Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا that a man came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated to him that he had two slaves who called him a liar, were dishonest in their dealings and did not obey his orders. In retaliation he scolded them and also beat them. How, then would his chastisement of his slaves be judged in relation to their misconduct. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that their misdeed would be weighed against the punishment which he inflicted on them and if the two were equally balanced, then the matter would rest there, but in case their crimes exceed his punishment it would be regarded as a favour bestowed on them by him. But, on the other hand, if the punishment awarded to them exceeded their misdeeds, then he would be made subject to punishment and retaliation for his excess. Then the man rose and sat down in a corner and started weeping. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him whether he had not read this verse وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقُسْطَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ (And We shall place scales to do justice on the day of judgment - 21:47). Then the man said that he had no choice but to free his slaves so that he might escape accountability. (Qurtubī)

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1. The author has referred here to a long ḥadīth in which it is mentioned that while reckoning a person's deeds, a card will be placed in the balance on which the *kalimah* لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ will be written. This card will weigh more than a heap of bad deeds. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

## Verses 48 - 50

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَاءً وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾  
 الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾  
 وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبْرَكٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ ۖ أَفَأَنْتُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

And We gave Mūsā and Hārūn criterion and a light and an advice for the God-fearing, [48] those who have awe of their Lord, though unseen, and are apprehensive of the Hour. [49] And this is a blessed advice We have sent down. Is it then you are rejecting it? [50]

## Commentary

الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَاءً وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (Criterion and light and an advice for the God-fearing - 21:48) The three attributes which belong to Torah are فُرْقَان (criterion) which differentiates between right and wrong second is ضِيَاء (light) which provides light and manifestation of truth to hearts, and the third is ذِكْر (advice) which is a source of guidance for the people. Some explain فُرْقَان as help from God which was available to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at all times. It was manifest when he was raised in the Pharaoh's house, then at the time of his contest with the Egyptian magicians which resulted in the Pharaoh's discomfiture, and again when he was pursued by the Pharaoh and his army and Allah saved him by causing dry passageways to appear in the river and, after the Bani Isra'il had crossed over to the other side, by drowning the Pharaoh and his army. Even after this incident Allah's help was available to him at all times. Qurṭubī has pointed out that whereas ضِيَاء (light) and ذِكْر (advice) are the attributes of Torah, فُرْقَان (criterion) is something else and not an attribute of Torah, because of the use of the conjunctive letter Wa'o (و) after the word فُرْقَان (Allah knows best).

## Verses 51 - 73

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ، مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهِ عَلِيمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾ إِذْ قَالَ  
 لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عَاكِفُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالُوا

وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا لَهَا عِبْدِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنَ اللَّاعِبِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ ۖ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذَا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَٰذَا بِالْهَيْتَانِ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالُوا فَاتُوا بِهِ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالُوا ءَأَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَٰذَا بِالْهَيْتَانِ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ ۖ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَٰذَا فَسئَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَرَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ ثُمَّ نَكَسُوا عَلَىٰ رُءُوسِهِمْ ۚ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ﴿٦٦﴾ أَفِ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَعِلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْنَا يَنَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً ۖ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَيْمَةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ ۚ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عِبْدِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

And earlier We had given Ibrāhīm his guidance, and We knew him well, [51] when he said to his father and his people, "What are these statues you are devoted to?" [52] They said, "We found our fathers worshipping them,"

[53] He said, "Surely you and your fathers have been in open error." [54] They said, "Did you come to us with truth or are you of those who make fun?" [55] He said, "No, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, who has created them, and I am one of those who bear witness to it. [56] And I swear by Allah that I will do something to your idols after you are gone, turning your backs." [57]

Then, he turned them into pieces, save the big one of them, so that they may come back to him. [58] They said, "Who has done this to our gods? He is one of the wrongdoers, indeed". [59] Some of them said, "We have heard a youth speaking of them. He is called Ibrāhīm." [60] They said, "Then, bring him before the eyes of the people, so that they may see". [61] They said, "Is it you O Ibrāhīm who has done this to our gods?" [62] He said, "Rather, this is done by this chief of theirs. So, ask them if they were to speak." [63] So they turned to themselves and said, "In fact, you are the wrongdoers." [64] Then, they reversed their position upside down (saying) "You already knew that they do not speak." [65]

He said, "Do you then worship, beside Allah, what does neither benefit you in the least nor harm you? [66] Fie upon you and upon what you worship other than Allah. Do you then not understand?" [67] They said, "(O people) burn him and help your gods, if you are to take action." [68]

We said, "O fire, be cold and safe for Ibrāhīm." [69] And they intended to harm him, but We made them the worst losers. [70] And We rescued him and Lūṭ towards the land we blessed for all the worlds. [71] And We blessed him with Ishāq and Ya'qūb as gift, and each one of them We made righteous. [72] And We made them the *imāms* who guide (people) under Our command, and We inspired them to do good deeds and to establish *ṣalāh* and pay *zakāh*. And Us alone they worshipped. [73]

### Commentary

وَتَاللّٰهِ لَا كَيْدُنَّ اَصْنَانُكُمْ (And I swear by Allah that I will do something to your idols - 21:57) The wording of the verse indicates that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام spoke these words before his community. But this



explanation leaves a little doubt in one's mind because Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had excused himself from going to the Eīd festival by pleading illness (إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ - I am sick - 37:89). And when they found their idols broken, they started a search for the culprit. If they already knew what he had said about their idols and that he had stayed behind alone when they had gone to attend the Eīd function, then it was fairly obvious that he had broken the idols. Then where was the need for them to go looking for the offender? There are more than one explanations to this situation. One, that since Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was the only one holding these views and enjoyed no standing in the community, people might have ignored and even forgotten what he had said as something of no consequence. (Bayan ul-Qur'an). Two, that those who were looking for the culprit were a different lot of people and were not aware of what he (Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام) had said about their idols. While in a third version Mujāhid and Qatādah are of the view that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not speak these words before other people, but only pictured the situation in his mind, or had said that only at heart, or he might have spoken them before one or two old persons after the people had left for the festival. Later, when the idols were found broken and the people started looking for the one who did it, these old men revealed the secret to them. (Qurṭubī)

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذَاذَ (21:58) The word جُذَاذَ is the plural for جُذُؤٌ which means fragment or piece. Thus its meaning is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام broke the idols into small pieces.

إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ (Save the big one of them - 21:58) That is, only the biggest idol was left intact and all the rest were broken. It is possible that the one which was left unbroken was either bigger in size or higher in esteem with the unbelievers.

لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ (So that they may come back to him - 21:58) There can be three explanations to this expression. One, if the object of إِلَيْهِ (to him) is Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام then the meaning would be that he himself wanted the unbelievers to ask him why he had broken the idols which would give him a chance to sneer at them that what they worshipped could not even look after themselves. The second meaning of إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ could be that he destroyed the idols in the hope that when the unbelievers saw them in pieces it might convince them of the futility of idol-worship and cause their return toward the religion of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

The third explanation is given by Kalbī. He says that the object of إِلِيهِ is كَبِيرٌ (the big). In that case the explanation would be that when the unbelievers, on their return saw the idols in pieces except the big one, who had a hammer resting on his shoulder, they might turn towards it for an explanation and getting no response from it they would see for themselves the helplessness of the idol.

### **The words of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام were not untrue, but only allusions**

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطَلِقُونَ (He said, "Rather, this is done by this chief of theirs. So, ask them if they were to speak." - 21:63) When the community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام got hold of him and asked him to confess his guilt, he said "The big one among them has done it. Why don't you ask him, if he can speak"?

The point to consider here is that the idols were broken by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and its denial and attributing the deed to the big idol, was contrary to fact and constituted an untruth. The exalted position of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام renders such a conclusion untenable. The exegesists have put forward several explanations to sort out this matter. One of them is that his statement is in the nature of an assumption i.e. why not consider the possibility that the deed was done by the big idol? And a supposition which is contrary to facts is not a lie as the Qur'ān itself says إِنْ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدٌ فَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْعَابِدِينَ (If the Raḥmān [All-Merciful] has a son then I am the first to serve him - 43:81). But the most convincing and straight forward explanation is the one adopted by al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, Qurṭubī and Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī, which says that it is a metaphoric attribution (استناد مجازي), that is the act which was done by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was attributed to the big idol by way of metaphoric attribution because it was this idol which, by reason of the reverence that it commanded in the whole community, persuaded Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام to do what he did with the smaller idols. It is like amputating a thief's hand and then telling him that none but his own misdeeds are responsible for the amputation.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had also attributed the breaking of the idols to the big idol by placing an axe on its shoulder or in its hands, thus pointing an accusing finger towards it. He reinforced this suspicion by his word when he suggested to the unbelievers that they should enquire from the big idol as to who had destroyed the other idols. It is a case of

metaphoric attribution (اسناد مجازی) which is very well illustrated in an Arabic saying انبت الربيع البقلة , that is the spring rains have raised crops. Although in actual fact it is God who produces and nourishes the crops, yet it has been ascribed to a visible cause, and no one can call it a lie. In the same manner Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was not telling an untruth when he attributed the act to the big idol. His adoption of this act of dissimulation in fact served many religious interests; one of them being to make the people aware of the possibility that perhaps the big idol was infuriated with the smaller idols because they too were worshipped with the same degree of reverence as itself. If they could be made to think on these lines, it could have opened the route to belief in the Oneness of Allah. If the big idol was not willing to accept the idols as objects of worship how could Allah, the Creator of all living things, agree to share His authority with anyone?

Secondly, perhaps they also wondered that if the idols whom they worshipped were really as powerful as they thought them to be, how could anyone have broken them with impunity? Thirdly, if the charge of breaking the smaller idols could be laid against the big idol, then it would be quite pertinent to ask that in that event it should also have the power of speech. That is why Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said فَسْتَلَوْهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ (So, ask them if they were to speak. - 21:63). Thus it is really not necessary to put far fetched meanings into his words which should be interpreted in a plain, straight forward manner. He attributed the deed to the big idol by way of metaphoric attribution. This was not contrary to facts nor did it constitute an untruth.

### Three untruths ascribed to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

Now the point to consider is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself has said according to some authentic traditions that ان ابراهيم عليه السلام لم يكذب غير ثلاث (Bukhārī and Muslim). That is Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام never spoke an untruth except on three occasions, and then those three occasions have been described in the same *ḥadīth* in some detail. The saying goes on to narrate that two out of the three untruths were spoken solely in the way of Allah. One of them is this verse i.e. بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ (Rather this is done by this chief - 21:63). The second one relates to Eid day when he said to his family اِنِّى سَقِيمٌ (I am sick - 37:89), and the third one was spoken to save his wife, from harm. This happened when he was travelling with his wife

Sayyidah Sārah رضى الله عنها, and passed through a settlement whose ruler was cruel and depraved and who used to seize the wives of other people and subject them to sexual abuse. However, he spared those who were accompanied by their fathers or brothers. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام reached this city, the ruler was informed about the arrival of the couple. So he got Sayyidah Sārah رضى الله عنها arrested and brought before him. When the ruler's men came to arrest her, they enquired from Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام about his relationship with her. Fearing the evil intentions of the wicked ruler Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said that she was his sister. (It is this episode which is referred to in the *ḥadīth* as the third lie) Despite this declaration they took her away with them. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had already briefed her that she should also tell the ruler that she was his sister, because according to Islamic relationship they were brother and sister as they were the only two Muslims in that land and hence according to Muslim brotherhood that relationship was valid. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام lacked the strength to defend himself and his wife against the ruler and his men, so he started praying to invoke Allah's Mercy. When Sayyidah Sārah رضى الله عنها was brought before the ruler, he started making advances to her, and in punishment he was turned into a cripple. Then he begged her to pray for him to return to normal in which case he would let her go without harm. When Sayyidah Sārah رضى الله عنها prayed for him and he returned to normal, he broke his promise and again tried to molest her and again became a cripple. This was repeated thrice and ultimately he gave up and sent back Sayyidah Sārah to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. This is a summary of the *ḥadīth*. However, three lies have been ascribed to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام clearly in this *ḥadīth* which is against the position and dignity of the prophethood. But the *ḥadīth* contains in itself a refutation of this charge i.e. none of the three episodes reveal that a deliberate lie was told. They were mere dissimulations (تَوْرِيه) which are permissible and legitimate if spoken in defense of oneself from cruelty and do not fall within the definition of a lie. The reasoning for this is given in the *ḥadīth* itself i.e. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had told Sayyidah Sārah that he had informed the ruler's men that she was his sister and that she should also say the same, because they were indeed brother and sister in the wider sense of universal Muslim brotherhood. This is called *tauriyah* (dissembling) where the words used may be interpreted differently, so that the listener understands them one way whereas the

speaker means something else. *Tauriyah* is permissible by consensus of Islamic jurists if used to save oneself from injustice. This is totally different from Shiite's Taqqiyah (تَقِيَّةُ), which is an outright lie. In Taqqaiya one does not only speak a lie but also acts on it, while in the case of *tauriyah* it is not a lie in the real sense as the speaker uses words which are capable of conveying his intentions as in the case of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) calling Sayyidah Sārah as his sister which was true in the sense that both were Muslims and Islam constitutes a universal brotherhood. Same argument can be put forward in the case of his other two utterances. It has been explained above that he said بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ as a *tauriyah* to refer the act toward the big idol by way of metaphor (اسناد مجازى). As for his saying, اِنِّى سَقِيمٌ, in common parlance the word Saqeem (سَقِيمٌ) means sick but it also means depressed, dejected, despondent and weak. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) said اِنِّى سَقِيمٌ in the latter sense which was absolutely true keeping in considering his feelings against the unbelievers, but the people took it in the popular sense i.e. sickness. Then the wording of the *ḥadīth* that two out of the three lies were to promote belief in the One and true Allah suggests that they were not sins, because no one can hope to please Allah by committing an act of sin.

### **It is sheer ignorance to deny the authenticity of the lies of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام)**

Some Muslims who are influenced by the writings of western orientalisks and Mirza Qadyani have declared this saying as unauthentic despite the fact that its narrators are reliable persons, because it accuses Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) of lying which is against the spirit of Qur'an, and that it is better to declare all the narrators of the saying as unreliable rather than to label Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) as a liar. From this they also made a rule that any saying, no matter how authentic its source might be, should be rejected if it is in conflict with the teachings of Qur'an. This ruling is absolutely valid and acceptable to entire Ummah, but the point is that the religious scholars have spent all their lives in researching each and every *ḥadīth*, and none of those which they have accepted as authentic conflicts with the teachings of the Qur'an. Such people lacking knowledge and being misguided do not hesitate to reject a *ḥadīth* and then justify the rejection by arguing that it is in conflict with the Qur'an. In the present case the saying itself makes it clear that the words which

may be interpreted as lies is only *tauriyah*. As for the question why the words of *tauriyah* are called lies in the saying, the answer is that the slightest slip of those who are close to God is taken seriously, as can be seen in the previous Sūrah Ṭāḥā when Sayyidnā 'Ādam's عليه السلام slip and mistake is referred by the word عصى (disobeyed - 21:121) and غوى (got misled - 20:121). It can be seen that whereas small mistakes can be forgiven and set aside in the case of common people, the same slips are considered as serious offences when committed by those who are dear to Allah Ta'ālā. The Holy Qur'ān recounts at many places Allah's displeasure over prophets in such situations. The *ḥadīth* of *Shafā'ah* (intercession before Allah Ta'ālā) which is famous and well known says that on the Day of Resurrection all people will gather together and request prophets from Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام upto the last prophet who came before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ one by one for *Shafā'ah* (intercession) that they be judged quickly. Every prophet will excuse himself from *Shafā'ah* (intercession) recounting one or more of his slips or mistakes. At last the entire humanity will approach the last of the prophets Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ and he will perform *ashshafa'ah al-kubrā*. According to this saying Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام will excuse himself quoting these utterances which though said as *tauriyah* and were, therefore, not lies in actual fact, were, none the less, below the dignity of a prophet. This lapse has been described as a lie in the *ḥadīth*. This was well within the prerogative of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and to the extent of narration of this saying we too may repeat it. But it is not permitted to anyone, except, when quoting the Qur'ān or this *ḥadīth*, to say that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had told a lie. The same view has been taken by Qurtubī and al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ in the commentary of Sūrah Ṭā-Hā in connection with Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام.

### Reference to a delicate hint regarding sincerity of action arising from the saying

Out of the three lies which have been attributed to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the saying two are said to be in the way of Allah Ta'ālā, but the third lie which was about Sayyidah Sārah رضي الله عنها was not said to be in the way of Allah Ta'ālā, although saving the chastity of one's wife is very much a part of religious duty. On this point, in the commentary by Qurtubī, a very delicate suggestion by Qazi Abu Bakr Ibn Al-'Arabi has

been reproduced which is apt to shatter the peace of mind of the pious and God fearing persons: in saving the chastity of one's wife, though an act of religious duty, there was also an element of personal interest in protecting his wife's honour. Because of the mixed motives this third incident has been excluded from the category of acts which are performed for Allah Ta'ālā, because Allah Ta'ālā has said **أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ** (Look, to Allah alone belongs the pure faith - 39:3). Had some common man like us been involved in such an incident, then the act would have surely qualified as an act which are performed to win the goodwill of God. But in view of the exalted position of the prophets, the smallest degree of personal motive was regarded against the perfect quality of their devotion.

### **How the fire of Namrūd turned into pleasant garden for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام**

Those who do not believe in miracles and supernatural events have given strange meaning to this episode. The philosophical assumption: that attributes which are attached with and complementary to something are not separable - is by itself fallacious. The fact is that nothing in this world is essential to or inseparable from something else. God gave to fire an attribute that it should burn and to water that it should cool, but these attributes are customary and habitual but not rationally necessary. No philosopher has so far been able to advance a convincing argument about these attributes being rational.

Thus these attributes being only habitual, they can be changed whenever God so wills. If God so wills, fire can act as a coolant and water as a burning agent, and it cannot be held as rationally impossible. This is what happens when Allah Ta'ālā reveals His miracles in support of the missions of His prophets. Thus He commanded the fire of Namrūd to cool down and the fire obeyed, and if the word **بَرِّدًا** (cool) was not followed by the word **سَلَامًا** (safe) the fire would have cooled like ice and would have caused him harm. The Qur'an says about the people of Nūḥ عليه السلام when they were drowned in water that **أَغْرَقُوا فَأَذِخُوا نَارًا** (they were drowned, and admitted into a Fire - 71:25).

**حَرِّقُوهُ** (Burn him - 21:68) that is the entire community and Namrūd decided to burn him in fire. The historic version is that for full one month the entire population of the city were busy collecting fire wood for this

purpose. Then after lighting the fire wood they fanned it to make it burn ferociously for the next seven days, until the flames rose high up into the sky. When the fire blazed with full ferocity they decided to throw Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) into it. But the fire was burning with such intensity that no one dared to approach it. Then the Satan gave them the idea to use a catapult to throw him into the fire. While people were preparing to throw Allah's Friend (خليل) into the sea of fire all the angels and all the creatures of the earth and sky cried out in unison at the fate that lay in store for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام). At that Allah Ta'ālā permitted them all to help Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام). When the angels asked Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) whether he needed their help. He replied that Allah was enough to help him and that He was watching over him. Jibra'īl al-Ameen (عليه السلام) enquired whether he could render him any help to which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) replied, "of course I need help, but from Allah, not from you". (Maẓharī)

فَلَمَّا يَبَأْ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (We said, "O fire, be cold and safe for Ibrāhīm." - 21:69) As stated above, one explanation of the fire becoming cool and comfortable for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) could be that it ceased to be fire and changed into a pleasant breeze. However, the more plausible explanation is that the fire remained as fire but did not touch the body of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام), although it burnt other things around him, so much so that it even burnt down the rope which bound him.

According to some historic versions he remained in the fire for seven days and used to recall that those seven days were the most comfortable time of his entire life. (Maẓharī)

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ

And We rescued him and Lūṭ towards the land We blessed for all the worlds. - 71

That is, We delivered Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Lūṭ (عليهما السلام) from the land ('Irāq) where Namrūd ruled and sent them to the peaceful land of Syria where our bounties were in abundance, not only for the locals but for the people of the world. Syrian land abounds both inwards and outwards bounties of Allah Ta'ālā. Inward bounties in the sense that many prophets were born in this land; and outward bounty in the sense that it has a moderate climate and is full of natural beauty with greenery,



springs and streams all around and sustains a large variety of vegetation, fruits and flowers.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً (And We blessed him with Ishāq and Ya'qūb as gift - 21:72) That is, Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon him the son Ishāq عليه السلام as per his supplication and in addition to that a grandson Ya'qūb عليه السلام as a gift. This is why he is referred to as *nāfilah* which originally means 'extra'.

### Verses 74 - 75

وَلَوْ طَأَّ اثْنِئَةُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ  
الْخَبِيثَاتِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَسَقِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا  
إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

As for Lūṭ, We gave him wisdom and knowledge and We delivered him from the town that used to do dirty deeds. Indeed, they were the people of evil, the sinners. [74] And We admitted him to Our mercy. Indeed, He was of the righteous. [75]

### Commentary

The name of the city from which Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام was saved and which has been mentioned in these verses was Sodom. There were seven other townships under this city which were thrown upside down by Jibra'īl عليه السلام except one which was left intact for Lūṭ عليه السلام and his followers. (Ibn 'Abbās, Qurṭubī)

(خَبَائِثُ 21:74) خَبَائِثُ (Khabā'ith) is the plural of خَبِيثَةٌ meaning wickedness. Too many wicked things collectively are called Khabā'ith (خبائث). Their most abominable practice in which even the animals do not indulge, was sodomy or homosexuality. It is possible that because of its extreme wicked nature this practice is referred to as خَبَائِثُ that is in plural instead of خَبِيثَةٌ in singular, as some commentators have explained. The second explanation is that the people of Sodom also indulged in other bad habits such as drinking, singing, shaving off beard, growing moustaches, wearing silk clothes, stone throwing, whistling etc. (Ruh ul-Ma'ānī).

## Verses 76 - 77

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ، فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَنَصَرْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

And (remember) Nūḥ, when he called (for help) earlier, so We responded to him and saved him and his family from the terrible agony, [76] and helped him against the people who belied Our verses. Indeed, they were the people of evil, therefore, We drowned them all. [77]

## Commentary

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ

And (remember) Nūḥ, when he called (for help) earlier - 21:76

Here مِنْ قَبْلُ (earlier) means before the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Lūṭ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام, whose account has just preceded in previous verses. As for the prayer of Nūḥ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, which is referred to here briefly, the version given in Sūrah Nūḥ is that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام had cursed his people, رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا (My Lord, leave not upon the earth of the unbelievers even one - 71:26). It is reported at another place that when the people of Nūḥ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام did not listen to him at all, he prayed to Allah Ta'ālā أَنِّى مَغْلُوبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ (I am vanquished; do Thou succour me! - 54:10) so You take revenge from them.

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ، فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ (So, We responded to him and saved him and his family from the terrible agony - 21:76) Here the expression 'terrible agony' either refers to the drowning in the deluge which annihilated the entire people or the torture which he and his followers suffered at the hands of those people.

## Verses 78 - 82

وَدَاوُدَ وَ سُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ إِذْ نَفَشَتْ فِيهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ ۚ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شَاهِدِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ ۚ وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۚ وَسَخَرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ ۚ وَكُنَّا

فَعِلَيْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَّكُمْ لِتَحْصِنَكُمْ مِنْهُ ۚ بِأَسْمِكُمْ ۚ  
 فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَلَسَلِیْمَنَ الرِّیْحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِ إِلَى  
 الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا ۖ وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَمِنَ  
 الشَّیْطَانِ مَنْ یَّغْوِیْهُمْ لَهُ ۚ وَیَعْمَلُونَ عَمَلًا دُونَ ذَلِكَ ۚ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ  
 حَافِظِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾

And (remember) Dāwūd and Sulaymān, when they were adjudicating about the tillage, when the goats of the people wandered therein grazing, and We were witness to their judgment. [78] So, We enabled Sulaymān to understand it. And to each one of them We gave wisdom and knowledge. And with Dāwūd We subjugated the mountains that proclaimed the purity of Allah, and the birds as well. And We were the One who did (it). [79]

And We taught him making of armour as dress for you, to protect you from what may harm you (in combat). So are you grateful? [80] And for Sulaymān, (We subjugated) the violent wind that blew under his command to the land in which We placed Our blessings. And We were the One who knew everything. [81] And from the devils, (We subjugated for him) those who dived in water for him and did jobs other than that. And We were the One who kept watch over them. [82]

### Commentary

نَفَسَتْ فِيهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ (the goats of the people wandered therein grazing - 21:78). In Arabic language the word نَفَسَ (translated above as 'wandering and grazing') means an animal getting into a field at night and damaging it.

فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ (So We enabled Sulaymān to understand it - 21:79). This expression means that Allah Ta'ālā had made known to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام the judgment which was better. Although the judgment passed by Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was not in conflict with religious jurisprudence, but the one adjudged by Sulaymān عليه السلام was inspired by Allah and was therefore, more appropriate because it benefitted both the parties without hurting either.

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى has reported this story on authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ and Qatādah and Zuhri that two persons came to Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؓ. One of them had a flock of goats and the other one owned a field on which he grew crops. The latter made a complaint against the former that his goats entered his field at night and ate up his crop (It appears that the respondent had accepted the petitioner's complaint and presumably the value of the flock of goats was equal to the value of the crop). Thus Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؓ announced his judgment that the owner of the goats should give his entire flock to the other man in compensation for his loss. (This judgment was in line with the religious jurisprudence which requires that if goods valued by a price are destroyed by someone, the amount of compensation will be determined according to that price. In this case, the value of the crop was the same as the value of the flock; hence the judgment. When these two men i.e. the complainant and the respondent, emerged from the court of Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؓ they met Sayyidnā Sulaymān ؓ at the door. He enquired from them about the judgment of their case, which they related to him. After hearing the judgment he remarked that if he were the judge in this case his verdict would have been different, which would be to the benefit of both parties. Then he went to his father Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؓ and repeated the same thing. Thereupon Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؓ enquired from him as to what kind of verdict he had in mind which would be more beneficial to both the parties. He replied that it would be more just and equitable if the flock of goats is given to the owner of the field so that he could use to his own benefit their milk, wool etc. and his field is given to the goats-man who should cultivate it and grow crops in it. When the field returns to the same condition in which it was before it was eaten by the goats, then the two men should get back their respective properties. Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؓ approved this judgment, called back the two men and announced the second judgment to them. (Maḏharī, Qurṭubī, etc.)

### **Can the verdict of a Judge (Qāḍī) be changed or annulled after it has been announced?**

It will be observed that Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؓ had pronounced a judgment which he revoked after hearing the views of Sayyidnā Sulaymān ؓ. Here a question arises whether a Qāḍī (Judge) has the authority to change his own verdict pronounced by him earlier.

Qurṭubī has discussed this and similar matters in great detail, the gist of which is that where a Qāḍī (Judge) has given a verdict which is in conflict with the religious jurisprudence or is contrary to the views held by the people at large, then, by consensus of the Ummah, such a verdict is not valid. Then it is not only permissible but mandatory on any other Qāḍī (Judge) to nullify the verdict and to issue a fresh judgment in line with religious jurisprudence, and also to remove the incompetent Qāḍī from his position of authority. But, if the judgment of a Qāḍī is based on religious jurisprudence and *Ijtihād* (اجتهاد) then it is not permissible for any other Qāḍīs (Judges) to revoke that judgment, because if this is allowed, the whole judicial system will collapse and Islamic Law will become a plaything in the hands of different people. However, if a Qāḍī, after passing a verdict according to the dictates of *Ijtihād* realizes that he had erred in his earlier judgment and *Ijtihād*, then it is allowed, rather preferable, that he himself should change the verdict. In a detailed letter which Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ wrote to Abū Mūsā al-Asha'ri ؓ elaborating the principles governing the administration of justice and disposal of court cases, he said that in case *Ijtihād* (اجتهاد) changes after announcing a judgment then the judgment should be changed to conform to the changed *Ijtihād* (اجتهاد) (This letter is reported by Dar Qutni).

According to great commentator (امام تفسیر) Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى both the judgments are bona fide and correct in their own respective right. The verdict passed by Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؓ was strictly judicial, whereas the judgment made by Sayyidnā Sulaymān ؓ was in the nature of a compromise between the two parties. The Holy Qur'ān itself says وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ (And compromise is better - 4:129). That is why the second judgment was praised by Allah Ta'ālā. (Maḥzarī)

Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ had instructed all his Qāḍīs (Judges) that when a dispute was raised before them, they should try to arrange a compromise between the parties. If a compromise was not possible, only then they should pass their judgment according to religious jurisprudence. The advantage in following this procedure, as he described it, was that in a legal judgment the loser has no option but to accept it, but at heart he develops a sense of hostility and hatred against his rival which is not healthy between the two Muslims. On the other hand, in the case of a compromise between the contesting parties, the element of hatred and ill

will is removed. (From Mu'īn al-Hukām)

Therefore, according to the explanation propounded by Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى it was not a case of revoking or changing an earlier verdict, rather a compromise was willingly agreed between both the parties to the dispute, before they left the court.

**If two *Mujtāhids* by their separate *Ijtihād* pass two conflicting verdicts, should both be regarded as valid or should one of them be rejected?**

A number of commentators have discussed this subject briefly or in detail whether all *Mujtāhideen* (مُجْتَهِدِينَ) be regarded as correct in their judgment (مُصِيب) and two opposing verdicts be taken as valid or, in case of conflict, one judgment be accepted and the other rejected. Qurṭubī has dealt this subject in great detail. Religious scholars have held different views on the subject from the very beginning, while projecting their reasoning. All have derived support for their views from this very verse. Those who support the argument that even conflicting verdicts are valid base their reasoning on the last sentence of the verse viz وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا (And to each one of them We gave wisdom and knowledge - 21:79). The sentence points out in clear terms that Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed wisdom and knowledge to both Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and Sulaymān عليه السلام, and there is no admonition to the former, nor is he warned for any error on his part. Therefore it proves that both the judgments given by Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام and Sulaymān عليه السلام were correct and valid. However, the judgment given by Sulaymān عليه السلام was preferred because it was advantageous to both the parties. As for those who argue that in the event of an *Ijtihādi* (اجْتِهَادِي) difference only one judgment can be correct and the other must be rejected as invalid, they too offer the first sentence of this very verse i.e. فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ (So, We enabled Sulaymān to understand it - 21:79) in support of their argument. They say that there is a specific reference to Sulaymān عليه السلام, to whom the correct decision was revealed by Allah. It, therefore, follows that the verdict announced by Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was not right even though he might have arrived at this decision through his *Ijtihād* (اجْتِهَاد) and was, therefore, free from all blame. This subject has been discussed in great detail in the books of jurisprudence. Here one should keep in mind that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that if some one did *Ijtihād* (اجْتِهَاد) and gave a decision in

accordance with the religious principles governing *Ijtihād* (اجتهاد), and his *Ijtihād* is correct, he will be granted two rewards one for the the labour involved in making the *Ijtihād*, and the other for arriving at the right decision. But if he erred in his *Ijtihād* he would still get one reward for just his labour. (This Ḥadīth is reported in most books of authoritative āḥadīth). This Ḥadīth also explains that the difference among the scholars on this issue is one of semantics only.

For those who believe that both the conflicting judgment are valid, the consequences are that for the erring *Mujtāhid* (مجتهد) as well as his followers that *Ijtihād* (اجتهاد) is correct and acting upon it will lead to their salvation. As for the view that only one verdict is correct and the other is wrong, the consequence of that also is no more than that the reward of the erring *Mujtāhid* will be lesser because his *Ijtihād* fell short of the absolute right decision. However, he will be free from all blame and his followers will not be regarded as sinners. (Those who wish to see further details on the subject are advised to refer to Qurṭubī's commentary, where the subject is discussed in great detail).

### **The question of animals of a person harming another person or damaging his property**

One can deduce from the verdict passed by Sayyidnā Dāwūd (عليه السلام) that if the animals of someone damage the property of a person at night, the owner of the animals will have to compensate the suffering party for his loss. However, it does not follow that a verdict given in accordance with the legal code of Sayyidnā Dāwūd (عليه السلام) must *ipso facto* be adopted in the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also. This is why there is a difference of opinion among the cardinal jurists on this issue. The ruling given by Imam Shafī' رحمه الله تعالى says that if someone's animals damage the fields of another person at night, the owner of the animals will have to compensate for the loss, but if the animals damage the field during day time, then there shall be no compensation due on the owner of the animals. This ruling can be said to be drawn from the judgment of Sayyidnā Dāwūd (عليه السلام) also, but, in fact he has based his ruling on a saying of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, which has been reported in Muwaṭṭa' of Imām Mālik as Mursal (مُرْسَل). This ḥadīth concerns an incident in which a camel belonging to Sayyidnā Barā' Ibn 'Āzib (رضي الله عنه) entered someone's orchard and damaged it. The matter when reported to

the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he ruled that the responsibility for protecting these fields and orchards at night rested on the owners, but if in spite of all reasonable measures adopted by them, the animals damaged the crop, then the owner of the animals shall be required to compensate for the loss. On the other hand the Imām Azam Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى and other jurists of Kūfa School hold the view that if the owner or the shepherd is with the animals, and yet they damage the field or the orchard due to his negligence, then the compensation for the loss rests with the owner irrespective of whether the damage is caused during day or night. But where unattended animal wandered into somebody's field damaging the same without any negligence on the part of the owner, then the owner of the animals will not be held liable for compensation, regardless of the time of day or night when the damage is caused. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى has based this ruling on the Ḥadīth جرح العجماء جبار (the wound caused by an animal is not compensated) which is reported by Bukhārī and Muslim and all other Scholars of Ḥadīth. It means that the owner of the animal is not bound to compensate the owner of the field for any loss caused by his animal (provided that the owner or the shepherd is not with the animal at the time of the damage). This saying has set the rule that irrespective of the time of day or night, if the animal has not been let loose deliberately by its owner into somebody's field and the animal has escaped, then the owner is not liable to make good the loss caused by his animal.

### Glorification of Allah by birds and mountains

وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (And with Dāwūd We subjugated the mountains that proclaimed the purity of Allah, and the birds as well. And We were the One who did (it) - 21:79.) Allah Ta'ālā had granted Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام a melodious voice among the other outward absolute excellences. When he used to recite Zabūr the birds would stop in their flight and join him in recitation. In the same way the mountains and the trees used to produce sounds as if they were singing praises to glorify Allah. A melodious voice was an external attribute granted to him by Allah and the joining with him of the birds and the mountains in praising Allah with him was a miracle. Now, for a miracle to happen it is not necessary that the birds and the mountains must necessarily possess life and intelligence; rather a miracle can give intelligence and knowledge



to those objects which were without these attributes earlier. However scientific research has proved that rocks and mountains do have life and knowledge to a limited extent.

Among the companions Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ؓ had a very sweet voice. Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by him when he was reciting the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Prophet ﷺ stopped and listened to the recitation. Then he ﷺ remarked that Allah Ta'ālā had granted him the sweet voice of Dāwūd ؑ. When Abū Mūsā ؓ learnt that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had been listening to his recitation, he said "Had I known that you were listening, I would have tried to recite with greater care".

### **The art of making armor was granted to Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ by Allah Ta'ālā**

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَّكُمْ (And We taught him making of armor as dress for you - 21:80) Lexically, the word لَبُوسٍ is used for anything which is worn in the neck for protection. Here it is used for armor which is used in battle for protection against enemy. In another verse Allah Ta'ālā says اَلَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ that is 'We softened for him iron'- 34:10). This means that either the iron used to become soft like wax in Sayyidnā Dāwūd's ؑ hands or he was taught to heat it up to make it soft and then mould it, a practice which is used in the foundries today.

### **Skills beneficial to humanity are desirable and are like acts of prophets**

The above verse also explains the benefit of the industry of the armor making i.e. لِيُحَصِّنْكُمْ مِنْ بَأْسِكُمْ (to protect you from what may harm you [in combat] - 21:80). This is a need which is felt universally both for religious and worldly purposes. That is why Allah Ta'ālā has said that He had taught this skill to Dāwūd ؑ which was a gift to him. It therefore follows that the learning and teaching of any skill which serves the need of people is an act of virtue, provided it is meant for the good of people, and not merely for the monetary gain. Different prophets are known to have been engaged in different skills in their time. For instance Sayyidnā 'Ādam ؑ used his skill in farming. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that an industrialist producing his product with the intention of serving people is like the mother of Mūsā ؑ who fed her own child and also got paid for her services. Similarly, an industrialist who sets before him the service of humanity as his ideal draws double benefit - one for serving people and

the other in the form of material gain from marketing his industrial products.

### **Making the air subservient to Sulaymān عليه السلام and related matters**

Hasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has narrated the following story. Once Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was inspecting his cavalry horses and got so engrossed in the inspection that he missed the 'Aṣr prayer. When he realized his lapse, he was very sorry, and removed these horses from service since they were the cause of this lapse. As this action was taken to win the goodwill of Allah and to atone for his negligence, Allah rewarded him by making the wind subservient to him, which is a superior and faster conveyance. Details of this event will appear with the commentary of the relevant verses of Sūrah Ṣād (سورة ص) *inshallah* .

وَلَسَلِّمِينَ الرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً (And for Sulaymān [We subjugated] the violent wind - 21:81) This sentence is a continuation of an earlier verse سَخَرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ (And with Dāwūd We subjugated - 21:79). Thus it means that just as Allah Ta'ālā had made birds and hills subservient to Dāwūd عليه السلام who used to sing in praise of Allah while he recited the Zabūr, in the same way He made the wind subservient to Sulaymān عليه السلام who used to fly on its wings swiftly wherever he wanted to go. It is worth noting here that while describing subservience of birds and hills for Dāwūd عليه السلام the word مع (with) has been used, but the subservience of wind for Sulaymān عليه السلام has been described using the letter لام (which means 'for'). In this there is a subtle hint that the subservience in both these cases was different. In the case of Dāwūd عليه السلام the birds and hills used to sing praise of Allah with him simultaneously without any command from him. But in the case of Sulaymān عليه السلام the wind acted according to his commands and carried him where and when he desired. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī, with reference to Al-Baiḍawī).

Ibn Kathīr in his commentary has described in fair detail the platform on which Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام was carried by the wind. It was made of wood and was of an enormous size which could accomodate him and all the functionaries of the government as well as the army alongwith their weapons, and the wind carried them all wherever it was commanded to go, covering two month's journey in one day.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim has narrated on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه that 600,000 six hundred thousand chairs were placed on this

platform on which humans who were also believers sat in front with Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام and behind them sat the believing Jinns. Then the birds were commanded to fly above the platform and protect it from the heat of the sun. Then by the command of Sulaymān عليه السلام the wind would take the platform to a specified destination. Some traditions report that throughout this aerial journey, Sulaymān عليه السلام used to sit with his head bowed down praying to and thanking Allah Ta'ālā in all humility and not turning his head to the right or to the left.

عَاصِفَةٌ (violent) Literal meaning of رِيحٌ عَاصِفَةٌ is strong and violent wind. At another place in the Holy Qur'ān the attribute of this wind is given as رُحَاءٌ which means a mild breeze, which neither raises dust nor creates turbulence. On the face of it, these attributes are contradictory, but they can be reconciled in that whereas in itself it was so strong that it could accomplish two month's Journey in one day, yet it did not create any turbulence. It is reported that when this platform used to fly in the air, no birds were ever harmed due to velocity of the wind.

### Subservience of Jinns and satans to Sulaymān عليه السلام

وَمِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ مَنْ يَّغْوُصُونَ لَهُ، وَيَعْمَلُونَ عَمَلًا دُونَ ذَلِكَ ۚ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حَافِظِينَ (And from the devils, (We subjugated for him) those who dived in water for him and did jobs other than that. And We were the One who kept watch over them. - 21:82) That is, Allah made the satan jinn subservient to Sulaymān عليه السلام and they used to dive in the rivers fishing pearls for him. Apart from this, they used to perform other jobs for him, some of which are mentioned in other verses.

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ، مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَّحَارِبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ That is ("Fashioning for him whatsoever he would - places of worship, statues, porringers like water-troughs - 34:13). Sulaymān عليه السلام also used to put them to hard labour and make them work in different projects.

### Satans

These are ethereal beings made of fire, who possess intelligence and understanding and are obligated to follow the laws of Shari'ah like humans. Those beings who fulfill these conditions are described by the word Jinn, while those among them who disobey the rules of Shari'ah and persist in their unbelief are called satans. It is obvious that all Jinns were made subservient to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام whether they were

believers or unbelievers. However, the believers regarded it as their religious duty to obey his wishes even before they were formally placed under his command, and there was no need to make a specific mention of their being placed under subservience to Sulaymān عليه السلام. Hence in the context of the Jinns being made subservient to Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام the reference is to satans (unbelieving Jinns) only. They were made to obey him despite their unbelief and defiance. Perhaps, it is for this reason that a sentence is added at the end of the verse saying, "We alone kept watch over them". Sulaymān عليه السلام was exposed to danger from the unbelieving Jinns, but Allah was his protector and they could do him no harm.

It will be observed that while in the case of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام Allah Ta'ālā had made subservient to him things which are extremely hard and dense, like iron and mountains, Sulaymān عليه السلام was given mastery over things which are ethereal and cannot even be perceived e.g. wind and Jinn. This shows that He is omnipotent and that His authority extends over all created things. (Commentary by Ra'zi)

### Verses 83 - 84

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾  
 فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ، فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ، وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ  
 رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَابِدِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

And (remember) Ayyūb, when he called his Lord saying, "Here I am, afflicted by pain and You are the most merciful of all the merciful." [83] So, We answered his prayer and removed whatever pain he had, and gave him (back) his family and the like thereof alongwith them, as a mercy from Our own Self and as a lesson for the worshippers. [84]

### Commentary

#### Story of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام

The story of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام is based mostly on Jewish legends. Those which are considered as historically reliable by scholars of *ḥadīth* are being reproduced here. The Holy Qur'ān tells us only that he suffered

from some serious disease but he endured his suffering with fortitude. Ultimately he prayed to Allah for recovery which was granted. During his illness all his family members and friends disappeared. They either died or just abandoned him to his fate. Then Allah Ta'ālā restored him to complete health and gave him back all his children and also an equal number in addition. The remaining elements of this story have come down to us either through authentic sayings or by way of historical accounts. Ḥafīẓ Ibn Kathīr has recorded the story as follows:

Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام, in the early days of his life, all sorts of material comforts such as wealth, property, magnificent houses, children, servants and attendants. But later he faced a trial whereby the prophets are normally tested by Allah, and was deprived of all these comforts. Moreover he suffered from a serious disease which was like leprosy and which affected his whole body except the heart and the tongue. In this miserable condition too he spent his time in prayers and in giving thanks to Allah Ta'ālā with his heart and tongue. Because of this serious illness all his relatives, friends and neighbors avoided him and placed him near a garbage-dump outside the city. Nobody went near him except his wife who used to take care of him. She was either the daughter or grand daughter of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and her name was Layya daughter of Mīsha Ibn Yūsuf عليه السلام. (Ibn Kathīr) All his wealth having been lost, she worked and earned a living for him and for herself and also nursed him in his illness. The ordeal of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام was nothing new, nor something to be wondered at. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said اشد الناس بلاء الانبياء ثم الصالحون ثم الامثل فالامثل that is the prophets face the most severe tests, and then come the other believers according to their degree of piety. In another tradition it is reported that every man is tested according to his adherence and devotion to religion. The stronger his beliefs, the harder is the test to which he is subjected, so that his rewards are in proportion to his sufferings. Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام occupies a distinctive position among all the prophets for firmness in his devotion and endurance in his sufferings in the same manner as Dāwūd عليه السلام enjoyed distinction for offering thanks to Allah Ta'ālā. Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام is a model of endurance and fortitude in the most trying circumstances. Yazīd Ibn Maisara reports that when Allah Ta'ālā deprived him of all his worldly possessions and subjected him to a severe ordeal, he concentrated all his mind and efforts upon the sole purpose of

remembering Allah Ta'ālā and offering prayers to Him. While thanking Allah Ta'ālā for all sorts of worldly comforts and children granted to him earlier and whose love had filled his heart completely, he also thanked Him for their total withdrawal because nothing remained to distract him from total devotion to Allah Ta'ālā.

### **The invocation of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام is not counter to patience**

The ordeal of Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام was very severe indeed. He not only lost all his worldly possessions but was also afflicted by a terrible disease because of which people avoided his company. He spent seven years and some months lying near a garbage dump outside the city, but never once did he lose his heart nor did he ever utter a word of complaint about his fate. His wife, Layya once asked him to pray to Allah for His Mercy as his sufferings had become unbearable, to which he replied that having enjoyed for seventy years the best of health surrounded by all the luxuries that money could buy, it would be unworthy of him to complain because a mere seven years has been spent in pain and poverty. His firm prophetic resolve, self-discipline and fortitude prevented him from beseeching Allah Ta'ālā's mercy on his condition, lest it should be construed as an act contrary to the unquestioning submission to the will of Allah Ta'ālā (Although to invoke Allah's Mercy for relief from sufferings does not mean absence of fortitude). Ultimately something happened which made him pray to Allah Ta'ālā for His Mercy but as mentioned earlier this was just a prayer and did not express a sense of complaint. As such Allah Ta'ālā has put His seal in acknowledgment of his extreme endurance in these words **إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا** (Surely We found him a steadfast man - 38:44). There are numerous versions of this story which have been omitted for their length.

Ibn Abī Hātim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that when Sayyidnā Ayyūb's عليه السلام supplication was granted, he was told to rub his heels on the ground and a stream of fresh and clear water would gush forth. He should then bathe himself in the water and also drink it, and the disease would disappear. Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام did as he was told and in no time his body, which was covered with boils and was reduced to skin and bones regained its original shape and health. Allah Ta'ālā sent him garments from Paradise which he wore

and sat down in a corner away from the garbage dump. His wife came to see him as usual and when she did not find him, she started crying. She did not recognize Ayyūb عليه السلام who was sitting nearby in a corner because his appearance had changed completely. Then she turned to him and asked him if he had any information about the sick man who was lying there, and whether he had gone somewhere or had been eaten up by dogs and wolves. She spoke to him for some time without realizing that the man was none other than her husband. Then Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام revealed himself, but even then she did not recognize him and asked him why he was making fun of her. Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام then told her to look at him again and try to recognize him. He also informed her that Allah Ta'ālā had healed his body after he invoked His Mercy. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه reports that after this, Allah Ta'ālā restored to him all his wealth and children and gave him more children equal in number to the children which he had before (Ibn Kathīr).

Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه says that Sayyidnā Ayyūb عليه السلام had seven sons and seven daughters but they all died while he was undergoing the ordeal. When his days of hardship were over, his children were brought back to life by Allah Ta'ālā and his wife also gave birth to as many more children, to which the Qur'an refers to as وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ (and the like thereof alongwith them - 21:84). According to Tha'labi this version is closer to the text of the Qur'an. (Qurtubī)

Some scholars say that he was granted as many new children as he had before and the word مِثْلُ (the like) refers to an equal number of grand children. (Only Allah knows best).

### Verses 85 - 86

وَأَسْمُعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ ۖ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَ  
أَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا ۖ إِنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

And (remember) Isma'īl and Idrīs and Dhul-Kifl. Each one of them was of those who observed patience. [85]  
And We admitted them to Our mercy. Surely, they were

of the righteous. [86]

### Commentary

#### Whether Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl was a prophet or a saint and his strange story

Three persons are mentioned in the above two verses. Out of these three there is no doubt about the prophethood of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام as they are mentioned in the Qur'ān as such several times. Ibn Kathīr is of the opinion that the mention of the name of Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl alongwith the other two prophets in the above verse shows that he too was a prophet. However, some other versions do not include him in the category of prophets. They say that he was a saint or a pious person.

Imām of Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr رحمه الله تعالى has reported on the authority of Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى that where Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام (who is referred to as a prophet in the Holy Qur'ān) became old and weak, he thought of appointing some one who could perform the duties of a prophet on his behalf during his life time. He assembled all his companions for this purpose and told them of his desire to appoint someone who would act as his deputy but who must fulfill three conditions namely that he should fast all the year round, should spend the nights in prayers and does not ever lose his temper. A relatively unknown person who was held in contempt by the people, stood up and offered himself for the job. Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام asked him whether he fasted all the year round, spent his nights in prayers and never lost his temper. The man replied in the affirmative and confirmed that he fulfilled all the three conditions. Perhaps Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام did not believe his claim and rejected him. After a few days Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام reconvened the meeting and repeated his conditions and asked his companions if any of them met the requirements. Everyone remained seated but the same man stood up again and claimed that he fulfilled the three conditions. Then Yasa' عليه السلام appointed him his deputy. When Satan realized that Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl had been selected as a deputy to Yasa' عليه السلام he asked all his aides to go to Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl and inveigle him into doing something which would result in his removal from the post of deputy. All his aides excused themselves and said that he was beyond their power to harm. The Satan (Iblīs) then said "Alright, leave him to me. I will take care of him."



Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl, true to his claim, used to fast during the day and pray the whole night and had a little nap in the afternoon. Satan went to him just when he was about to take his afternoon nap and knocked at the door. He got up and enquired who was there. The Satan replied "I am an old tortured man". So he opened the door and let him in. The Satan came in and started a yarn about the cruelty and injustice which he suffered at the hands of his community and relatives. He stretched the story so long that no time was left for Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl to take his usual nap. So, he told the old man (Satan) that he should come to him at the time when he came out, and he would cause justice to be done to him.

Later on Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl sat in his court and waited for the old man but he did not turn up. Next morning he again waited for the old man in his court but again he did not come. Then in the afternoon when he was about to have his nap, the old man came and started beating at the door. He enquired who he was, and the Satan replied again - "an old tortured man" so, he opened the door and asked him "Didn't I tell you to come to my court yesterday but you failed to appear, nor did you come this morning?" To this the Satan answered "Sir, my enemies are very wicked people; when they learnt that you were sitting in your court and would force them to give back to me what was my due, they agreed to settle the matter out of court. But as soon as you left your court, they went back on their promise". Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl asked him again to come to his court when he was there. All this conversation continued for such a long time that he could not have his usual nap on that day also. He then went to the court and waited for the old man, who again did not turn up. The next day again he waited for him until late in the noon but to no avail. When he returned home on that day, he was very sleepy because of lack of sleep for last two days. Therefore, he asked the family members not to allow any one to knock at the door. The old man came again and wanted to knock at the door but the family members stopped him, so he entered the house through a ventilator, and started knocking at the door of his room, Sayyidnā Dhul-Kifl got up again and saw that the old man had come inside the house while the door was still closed. So he asked him as to how he had entered the house.

Then suddenly he became aware that the man standing before him

was Satan and asked him "Are you the God's enemy Iblīs?" He admitted that he was Satan and remarked, "You have thwarted all my plans and frustrated all my efforts to entice you in my design. My intention was to make you angry somehow, so that one of your claims before Yasa' ﷺ could be proved false." It was because of this episode that he was given the title Dhul-Kifl, which means a person who is true to his covenant and performs his duties faithfully, and this title was fully deserved by him. (Ibn Kathīr)

Another narrative is quoted in Masnād of Aḥmad but has the name of the person Alkifl instead of Dhul-Kifl. That is why Ibn Kathīr has observed after quoting this narrative that he was a different person and not Dhul-Kifl, who is mentioned in this verse. The narrative is as follows:

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ has reported that he had heard a ḥadīth (حديث) from the Holy Prophet ﷺ not once, but more than seven times that there was a man by the name Kifl among the Banī Isrā'īl who did not abstain from any type of sin. Once a woman came to him and he persuaded her to have sexual intercourse with him on payment of sixty guineas. When he got down to start the intercourse, the woman started crying and trembling. So he enquired from her as to what the matter was because he had not used any kind of force on her. The woman replied that the cause of her distress was that she had never in all her life committed adultery and that it was only her adverse circumstances which had forced her to agree to the act. Hearing this the man got up and told her to go away and keep the money he had given her. He also promised her that he would never again indulge in any sin. Then it so happened that he died the same night and in the morning it was seen that there was a hidden writing on his door that Kifl had been pardoned by Allah غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لِكِفْل. Ibn Kathīr observed after quoting this from Masnad of Ahmad that none of the six authentic books on ḥadīth has reported this tradition and its authority is weak. Even if the tradition is true, it mentioned the name as Kifl and not Dhul-Kifl, which means he was some other person. (Allah knows best).

The sum and substance of this story is that Dhul-Kifl was the deputy of Prophet Yasa' ﷺ and it is possible that because of his virtuous deeds

his name has been mentioned along with prophets. It is also possible that initially he was the deputy of Sayyidnā Yasa' عليه السلام and later on he was elevated to the status of a prophet by Allah Ta'ālā.

### Verses 87 - 88

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ عَلِيٌّ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾  
فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ<sup>١</sup> وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

And (remember) Dhunnūn (the man of the fish, namely Yūnus), when he walked away in anger and thought that We will never put him to trouble. Then, he called (Us) in depths of darkness saying, "There is no god but You. Pure are You. Indeed I was among the wrongdoers". [87] So We responded to him and rescued him from the distress. And this is how We rescue the believers. [88]

### Commentary

وَذَا النُّونِ (21:87) The story of Sayyidnā Yūnus Ibn Mattā عليه السلام appears in the Holy Qur'ān in Sūrah Yūnus, Sūrah Al-Anbiyā', Sūrah As-Ṣaffāt and Surah Nūn. At some places he is mentioned by his real name and at others by the title as *Dhunnūn* or *Sahibul Ḥūt*. The meaning of Nūn and Ḥūt both is fish. Thus, *Dhunnūn* and *Sahibul Ḥūt* can be translated as man of the fish. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام remained inside the stomach of a fish for a few days in very odd circumstances by the will of Allah. It is because of this episode that he is sometimes referred to as *Dhunnūn* or *Sahib Al-Hut*.

### The Story of Yūnus عليه السلام

According to the commentary by Ibn Kathīr, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was sent to preach Allah's message among the people of Nineveh which is a township in the region of Mousel. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام invited them towards Islam and asked them to follow the true religion and perform good deeds, but they rejected his call and behaved in an arrogant and defiant manner. Being dejected and annoyed, Yūnus عليه السلام left the place after warning them that Allah's wrath would descend upon them within three days. After he had departed from the township, the people realized

that his warning might come true. (According to some versions they had actually seen the signs of the impending disaster). So they repented and asked pardon for their sins and the entire population retired to a forest with their cattle and animals. Then they started lamenting and bewailing and invoked Allah's forgiveness and protection. Allah Ta'ālā accepted their sincere contrition and wailing over their sins and released them from the fear of the impending disaster. While all these events were taking place, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام waited expecting the news about the destruction of his people. But when he learnt that the storm had passed and his people were safe and sound, he worried that they would regard him as a liar. According to some versions, it was customary with his people to execute a person if he was proved a liar. (Maẓharī). Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, therefore, feared for his life and decided to go away to some other place rather than returning to his own people. He came across a river on his way and boarded a boat to cross it. While crossing the river it so happened that the boat was caught in a whirlpool and was in danger of sinking. The boatmen decided that if one of the passengers was off loaded from the boat the chances were that the rest of them would be saved from drowning. So they cast lots to decide as to who should be off-loaded. As luck would have it they drew the name of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. It seems that the boatmen were aware of his exalted position and they refused to throw him in the river. The lot was drawn a second and then a third time and his name was drawn on both occasions. This episode has been mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an in the following words: فَسَاهُمْ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ (and cast lots, and was of the rebutted - 37:141). Thereupon Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام got up, took off the extra clothes which he was wearing and threw himself in the river. Immediately a fish from the Caspian Sea arrived on the scene as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā and swallowed Yūnus عليه السلام. (as reported by Ibn Mas'ūd رحمه الله). The fish was further commanded by Allah Ta'ālā that he was not to be taken for food, that no harm was to be done to his body (both flesh and bones) and that he was only to be held as a prisoner in its stomach for a few days. (Ibn Kathīr)

There are references in the Qur'an that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام earned Allah Ta'ālā's displeasure when he left his people without His specific command and his stay for a few days in the stomach of the fish was a sign of Allah's displeasure for his lapse.

It is safe to assume that the warning of Sayyidnā Yūnus (عليه السلام) to his people about their imminent destruction within three days was not the outcome of his own judgment but was based on Divine revelations. Similarly, his dissociation from his people was nothing new and was in line with the practice of other prophets in similar situations and must, therefore, also have been done by the command and approval from Allah Ta'ālā. So, upto this point there seems nothing to be wrong in his conduct which would deserve Allah Ta'ālā's displeasure. But later on when Allah Ta'ālā accepted the genuine remorse and repentance of the people and released them from the fear of destruction, it was to be expected that Yūnus (عليه السلام) would return to his people. But his decision not to return to them and go away from them was based on his own judgment (اجتهاد). He reasoned that if he returned to them, they would regard him as a liar and his teachings would be rendered ineffectual and fruitless. There was also the danger that he might have been taken and executed. For these reasons he was hopeful that his parting with his people would not be a reprehensible act before Allah Ta'ālā. Although his decision to migrate was based on his personal judgment (Ijtihad اجتهاد) without waiting for a clear direction from Allah Ta'ālā, yet it did not constitute a sin. Nevertheless for a prophet to take a decision on his own without waiting for the revelation (وحي) from Allah Ta'ālā was not liked by Him. This was not a crime but an act which was not desirable. The status of the prophets and His closed ones is highly exalted and it is expected of them not to indulge even in such undesirable acts. The slightest lapse on their part is subjected to Allah's displeasure and reproach from Him, and that is why he faced this hardship.

It is quoted in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī from al-Qushairi that this had happened to Yūnus (عليه السلام) when the tempest was removed from his people, which was against his wish and that his stay in the stomach of the fish for a few days was more of a reformatory measure than punishment, as sometimes people warn their young children and take reformatory measures against them. (Qurṭubī)

After learning the background of the episode it would be easier to understand the meanings of the verses which is as follows.

ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا (he walked away in anger 21:87) It is obvious that the anger was against his own people. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه) has explained it as such.

فَقَطَّنَ أَنْ لَّنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ (and thought We will never put him to trouble - 21:87) Lexically the word نَقْدِر has three different meanings: If it is derived from قُدْرَة the meaning would be that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام imagined that Allah Ta'ālā would not be able to gain mastery over him. This is obviously an unacceptable explanation as no Muslim can ever entertain such thoughts in his mind, least of all a prophet of Allah. Alternatively if it is considered that the word نَقْدِر is derived from قَدَّر then the meaning would be to straighten or narrow down, as the Qur'an says:

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ (Allah extends provision to whom He wills and straitens it.) The Imāms of Tafsīr Ata', Sa'īd Ibn Jubair, Ḥasan Baṣrī and many other scholars have adopted this interpretation, and therefore the meaning of the verse would be that Yūnus عليه السلام thought that he would not be put in a straitened condition by Allah Ta'ālā if he abandoned his people. This second explanation is adopted by most commentators (and the translation of the text as appeared above is based on it). The third possibility is that نَقْدِر is a derivative of تَقْدِير in which case the verse would mean that Yūnus عليه السلام was sure that he would not be blamed if he dissociated himself from his people. Qatādah, Mujāhid and Farrā' have adopted this explanation.

**The prayer of Yūnus عليه السلام is invoked by all people at all times and for all their needs**

وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (And this is how We rescue the believers - 21:87.) That is, just as We released Yūnus عليه السلام from his misery and distress, so do We deliver other believers (مُؤْمِنِينَ) when they turn towards Us repenting their sins sincerely.

According to a ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ if a Muslim prays to Allah Ta'ālā for the grant of a wish in the words used by Yūnus عليه السلام when he was in the stomach of the fish i.e. لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (21:87) He would accept his prayer and grant his wish. (Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Maḥzarī)

### Verses 89 - 90

وَزَكَرِيَّا إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾  
فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ، وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ، يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ، زَوْجَهُ، إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا

يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَشِيعِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

And (remember) Zakariyyā when he called his Lord, "O my Lord do not leave me alone and You are the best of inheritors." [89] So, We responded to him and gave him Yaḥyā and made his wife good for him. They used to race towards the good deeds and call Us with hope and fear; and they were humble to Us. [90]

### Commentary

Sayyidnā Zakariyyā عليه السلام wished for a son and heir for which he prayed to Allah. But at the same time he made it clear that Allah is the best heir no matter if he had a son or not (أَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ You are the best of inheritors - 21:89). This was the manifestation of the prophetic respect in that the main concern of the prophets should always be toward Allah Ta'ālā, and even if some one else came into focus, their attention should not deviate from the main objective.

يَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا (and call Us with hope and fear - 21:90). This may be interpreted to mean that they call Allah Ta'ālā both in comfort and distress. The other explanation of the verse is that during their prayers they remain suspended between hope and fear hoping that Allah would forgive their sins and fearing that their lapses may bring on them His displeasure.

### Verse 91

وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً  
لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

And (remember) her who protected her private part. So, We blew in her (a life) through Our Spirit, and made her and her son a sign for all the worlds. [91]

### Commentary

This verse directs the Holy Prophet ﷺ to tell his people the story of the pious lady who controlled her passions and then through Jibra'īl عليه السلام Allah had breathed His Spirit into her and she gave birth to a son (Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام) who was a symbol of Allah's Divine Power that He can cause babies to be born without a father, and also without both the

parents as in the case of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام.

### Verses 92 - 105

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۖ وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَتَقَطَّعُوا  
أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ كُلُّ إِلَيْنَا رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ  
وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعِيدِهِ ۖ وَأَنَا لَهُ كَتِيبُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَحَرِّمُ عَلَى  
قَرِيَّةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا إِنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ  
وَمَاجُوجُ وَهُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَاقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ  
الْحَقُّ فِإِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ أَبْصَارُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۖ يَوِيلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِي  
غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا بَلْ كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ  
حَصْبُ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَرِدُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾ لَوْ كَانَ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَهًا مَّا  
وَرَدُّوهَا ۖ وَكُلٌّ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا  
يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُم مِّنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا  
مُبْعَدُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ حَسِيسَهَا ۖ وَهُمْ فِي مَا اشْتَهَتْ  
أَنْفُسُهُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ لَا يَحْزَنُهُمُ الْفَرَعُ الْاَكْبَرُ وَتَتَلَقَّيْهُمْ  
الْمَلَائِكَةُ ۖ هَذَا يَوْمُكُمْ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ يَوْمَ نَطْوِي  
السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ ۖ كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ ۖ  
وَعْدًا عَلَيْنَا ۖ إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِن بَعْدِ  
الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

Surely, this is the fraternity of your Faith, a single Faith, and I am your Lord; so worship Me. [92]

And they split up their ways from one another. All of them have to return to Us. [93] So, the one who does righteous deeds, while he is a believer, his effort will not be rejected and We are to put it on record. [94]



It is banned for (the people of) a town We destroyed that they come back [95] until when the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj (Gog and Magog) are released, while they run down from every height, [96] and the True Promise draws near, then suddenly the eyes of the disbelievers shall remain upraised (in terror and they will say,) "Woe to us! We were neglectful to this; rather we were transgressors indeed." [97]

Surely, you and whatever you worship other than Allah are the fuel of Jahannam. There you will have to arrive. [98] Had they been gods, they would not have arrived at it. And all of them will remain there forever. [99] There are screams for them therein and they will not hear. [100] Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it. [101] They will not hear the slightest of its sound, and they will remain for ever in what their selves desire. [102] They shall not be grieved by the Biggest Panic, and the angels shall receive them (saying), "This is your day that you had been promised" [103] - the Day when We roll up the sky like a scroll rolls up the writings. As We originated the first creation, We shall bring it back again - a promise (undertaken to be binding) on Us. We are sure to do it. [104] And We have written in Zabūr (Psalms) after the Dhikr (the Torah) that the land will be inherited by My righteous slaves. [105]

### Commentary

So far the Sūrah deals with the stories of the prophets and several basic as well as minor principles relevant to those stories. The basic beliefs such as Oneness of God, prophethood and the day of Resurrection are common to all prophets and are the foundation of their invitation to the people to follow the True Faith.

وَحَرَامٌ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ (It is banned for (the people of) a town We destroyed that they come back - 21:95.) Commentators have given two different meanings to this verse. One, that the town and its people which Allah Ta'ālā has destroyed cannot come back to life. The second explanation is that it is binding on the town which Allah has destroyed that it shall not return to this world. (Qurṭubī) Thus the meaning of the verse is that the door of repentance is closed after death, and it is no more

possible for someone to return to this world and atone for his sins by performing righteous deeds. The final court will take place on the Day of Judgment.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ وَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ (Until when the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj (Gog and Magog) are released, while they run down from every height - 21:96.) In the previous verse it was said that those who died in a state of unbelief will never return to this world. The phrase "until the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj appear", really means that such people will never return, because the appearance of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will be a sign of near approach of the Dooms Day.

It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim through Sayyidnā Hudhaifah ؓ that he and some other Ṣaḥābah ؓ, were in the midst of a discussion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to them and enquired as to what were they deliberating. They replied that they were discussing about the Qiyāmah (Dooms Day). Thereupon he ﷺ said that Qiyāmah will occur only after ten signs have become manifest, and the appearance of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will be one of them.

Here the word فُتِحَتْ (released) is used for Ya'jūj Ma'jūj which means to let loose, which suggests that until the appointed time they will remain under restraint and confined behind some barrier from which they will be released when Doomsday is near. It is evident from the Holy Qur'ān that this restraint is the wall made by Dhulqarnain which will disappear near the Qiyāmah. Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and Dhulqarnain have been described in fair detail in Sūrah Al-Kahf, to which the reader may refer.

مِنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ (while they run down from every height - 21:96) The word حَدَبٌ means an elevated place which may be a mountain or just a lump in the ground. We have also seen in Sūrah Al-Kahf that the place where Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj have been confined is somewhere beyond the northern mountains. So when they will come out, they will be seen rushing down the mountain sides in their hordes.

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ (Surely, you and whatever you worship other than Allah are the fuel of Jahannam - 21:98) Here a question may arise as to the application of this verse to the case of Sayyidnā Masīḥ ؑ, Sayyidnā 'Uzair ؑ and angels who were also worshipped by some people. According to account given by Qurṭubī in his Tafsir, this issue was

adequately resolved by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ who wondered that there is a verse in the Qur'ān about which people have reservations, yet they do not question him about it. He went on to say that this may be due to the fact that either the people have found a convincing answer to their doubts or that they are totally indifferent and do not consider the matter important enough for any kind of investigation. When people asked him which particular verse he had in mind, he recited the verse **إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ** and went on to say that when this verse was revealed, it made the unbelievers of Quraish very angry because they felt that it offended their gods. So they approached Ibn al-Ziba'rā (A scholar of the scriptures) and complained to him about it. He said that if he were present there, he would have given them a reply which would have confounded all of them. Pressed further he said that he would have asked them what they thought about Sayyidnā Masīḥ ؑ and about Sayyidnā 'Uzair ؑ, who were worshipped by the Christians and the Jews respectively (meaning whether they too معاذ الله would be sent to Hell). The unbelievers of Quraish were delighted to hear this and were sure that Muḥammad ؐ would have no answer to their question. At that point Allah Ta'ālā revealed the verse : **إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ** (Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it. - 21:101) that is those for whom Our grace and good result is ensured will be kept away from Hell. And for the same Ibn al-Ziba'rā Allah Ta'ālā has revealed this Qur'ānic verse **وَلَمَّا ضُرِبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلًا إِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّونَ** (43:57) that is when Ibn al-Ziba'rā put forward the example of Sayyidah Maryam the people of his clan, Quraish, were overtaken by joy.

**لَا يَحْزَنُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ** (They will not be grieved by the Biggest Panic - 21:103). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said that **الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ** (the Biggest Panic) refers to the second call of the Horn (صُور), when all the dead will assemble to give an account of their actions in the world. Some others have said that **الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ** (the Biggest Panic) is the first call of the Horn. Ibn Al-'Arabī has said that the Horn will be blown thrice: The first call will be **نَفْعَةُ الْفَزَعِ** which will put everyone into utter confusion, and is referred to here as **الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ** (the Biggest Panic). The second call will be **نَفْعَةُ الصُّعْقِ** when every one will die. The third call will be **نَفْعَةُ الْبُعْثِ** when all the dead will be resurrected. This version derives support from a ḥadīth of Abū Hurairah ؓ which has been quoted in Musnād Abū Ya'lā and

Baihaqi, 'Abd Ibn Hūmaid, Abū al-Sheikh, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabari etc. (Maẓharī).

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجْلِ لِلْكِتَابِ (The Day when We roll up the sky like a scroll rolls up the writings. - 21:104.) According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ the word سِجْل means a sheet of a book. 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalḥah, 'Aufī, Mujāhid, Qatādah, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr have all adopted the same meaning of the word. The word كُتِبَ in the verse is used for اَلْمَكْتُوبُ th it is something written. So the meaning of the verse is that the sky will be rolled up like a scroll with its writings. (Ibn Kathīr)

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī contains a story on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that on the Day of Judgement Allah Ta'ālā would roll up all the seven skies and the seven worlds alongwith all the created things thereon in His hand, and all of them together would be no more than a grain of rye in His hand. (Ibn Kathīr)

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ (And We have written in Zabūr (Psalms) after the Dhikr (the Torah) that the land will be inherited by My righteous slaves. - 21:105) The word زُبُور (zabūr) is the plural of زُبُر (zuburr), which means book. It is also the name of the book which was revealed to Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ. Opinions differ as to the meaning of the word in the present context. According to a version attributed to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ the word ذِكْر in the verse refers to Torah, and زبور to all other books revealed after Torah i.e. Zabūr (Psalms), Injīl (Evangel) and Qur'ān. (Ibn Jarīr) The same explanation is adopted by Ḍaḥḥāk. However, Ibn Zaid has explained that ذِكْر refers to لوح محفوظ (the Preserved Tablet) and زبور relates to all the books which were revealed to the prophets. Zajjāj has also adopted this explanation. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

الْأَرْضُ (the word 'land' in - 21:105) All commentators agree that the word in this verse refers to the land of Paradise. Ibn Jarīr has reported this explanation from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. The same explanation is also adopted by Mujāhid, Ibn Jubair, Ikrimah, Suddī and Ab Al-'Aaliyah. Imām Rāzī has said that another verse of the Holy Qur'ān supports this explanation. The verse is وَأَوْزَنَّا الْأَرْضَ نَبْؤًا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ (And has bequeathed upon us the earth for us to make our dwelling wheresoever

we will in Paradise - 39:74) The words used in the verse that the pious will inherit the اَرْض also lend credence to the view that the word اَرْض means land of Paradise, because the land of the earth can be inherited by all, whether believers or non-believers. Also the phrase that the pious will inherit the land (اَرْض) follows the mention of Qiyāmah, and it is well known that after the Qiyāmah there will be no land of the earth but only the land of the Paradise. Another version of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ says that the word اَرْض means just land, and includes both the land of the earth as well as of Paradise. It is quite obvious that the land of the Paradise will be inherited by the pious people. As for the land of the world also it is stated in the Holy Qur'ān at several places that there will be a time when the entire land of the world will belong to the pious believers. One of such verse is: إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (Surely, the land belongs to Allah. He lets whomsoever He wills, from among His slaves, inherit it. And the end-result is in favour of the God-fearing. - 7:128).

In another verse it is said: وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ (Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good deeds that He will certainly make them (His) vicegerents in the land. - 24:55).

Yet another verse says: إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْأَشْهَادُ (Surely, We shall help Our Messengers and those who have believed in the present life, and upon the day when the witnesses arise. - 40:51).

The history has already witnessed the control of the pious believers over the better part of the world, and it will again come under their control during the time of Sayyidnā Mahdi ؓ. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī & Ibn Kathīr)

### Verses 106 - 112

إِنَّ فِي هَذَا لَبَلَاغًا لِقَوْمٍ غَابِغِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ آذَنْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ ۖ وَإِنْ أَدْرَىٰ أَقْرَبُ أَمْ بَعِيدُ مَا تُوعَدُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَإِنْ أَدْرَىٰ لَعَلَّهُ فِتْنَةً لِّكُمْ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ

حِينَ ﴿١١١﴾ قُلْ رَبِّ احْكُم بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمَنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ  
عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Surely, in this (the Qur'ān) there is a message conveyed to a people who worship (Allah). [106] And We have not sent you but as mercy for all the worlds. [107]

Say, "What is revealed to me is simply that your God is One God. So do you submit?" [108] But, if they turn away, then say (to them), "I have warned you all alike, and I do not know whether what you have been warned of is near or far. [109] Surely, He knows what is spoken openly and He knows what you conceal. [110] And I do not know; perhaps it is a trial for you and an enjoyment for a while." [111]

He (Our Messenger) said, "My Lord, judge with truth. And Our Lord is the Raḥmān (All-Merciful), the One whose help is sought against what you describe. [112]

### Commentary

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (And We have not sent you but as mercy for all the worlds. - 21:107) *عَالَمِينَ* is plural of *عَالَمٌ* which means 'world' and includes all creatures including humans, animals, plants, Jinns etc. In order to properly understand the meaning of the verse one should also understand that the true essence of the entire universe is the invocation of Allah Ta'ālā and His worship. When this essence departs from this world and no one is left to worship Allah, everything in it will perish. In other words that is the day when Qiyāmah would occur. When it is understood that the invocation and worship of Allah Ta'ālā is the essence of all living things, then the reason for describing the Holy Prophet ﷺ as mercy to the Worlds becomes obvious because it is his teachings and the purity of his personal life alone which keep alive the worship of Allah Ta'ālā until Qiyāmah. That is why he declared "I am the blessing sent by Allah *أَنَا رَحْمَةٌ مُّهِدَاةٌ*" (Ibn 'Asākir quoting Abū Hurairah). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said *أَنَا رَحْمَةٌ مُّهِدَاةٌ يَرْفَعُ قَوْمٌ وَخَفِضَ آخَرِينَ* that is "I am the blessing sent by Allah so that I lift up the people (who obey Allah) and humble the other people (who disobey Allah). (Ibn Kathīr)

It, therefore, follows that performing *jihād* against the unbelievers in order to lessen *shirk* and *kufr* (unbelief) and in the hope of reclaiming those who transgress the Divine Commands of Allah Ta'ālā is an act of mercy.

***Alḥamdulillāh***  
**The Commentary on**  
**Sūrah Al-Anbiya'**  
**Ends here.**